

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday January 6th, 1943

My dear All,

A happy New Year to all. May it be happier than the last and may peace once more reign throughout the world.

My last two letters I fear have not been very interesting. I do not know that this will be any better. It has been difficult to concentrate. I must just jot things down as I think of them.

Joe and family left on Saturday evening. I did not see them off. Mom did not like my going alone and she did not want to go. They no doubt have arrived safely. Joe certainly looked better for the change. Mr and Mrs Cook were kind to them and took them about in their car. They also had some musical evenings with Blodwen. We did not go to the pictures at all and had very few visitors. Joe and Roy and Merle walked to the Warm Bath and back one day. The Cooks took Blodwen out in their car to bring them home but missed them although they were still at the Bath. Roy can swim. We were interested in a swallow's nest which the Bath Caretaker says has been occupied for some years in succession in the same spot. Strange to say the nest is built on one of the lamp shades on the stoep and has been occupied for years. Customers having refreshments do not seem to disturb the occupants of the nest.

One morning when I went to take the temperature, I found the whole garden was flooded. Someone must have tampered with the main sluice in the street above. The water had run right through on to the front garden and the pavement and was still running when I discovered it. Joe tried to put it right but could not manage it. However the boy saw to it when he arrived. Another morning when still in bed, I heard water running and found the tap in the front garden was running. No damage was done.

One Evening we went to Uncle Walter's and Joe showed his films. He, Uncle, recognised the pictures of Grass Ridge etc and seemed interested. Olive fetched and brought us home again. Joe also gave a show at Aunt Eliza's. Mrs and Maude Miller and two of the children were there, also the two Miss Loscombes.

One evening on their return from the park, Joe and the children brought home a kestrel hawk that had been wounded in the wing. It was quite a pretty bird. We let it go in the garden and saw it the next day but it has disappeared since. Another time, in fact the evening they left, they caught a chameleon in the front garden. They very much wanted to take it with them in the train. Am glad they are fond of nature.

Roy sang a solo in church very nicely at the morning service. I guess Rev Weavers will get Blodwen to help him in the musical line when he gets settled in at Uitenhage.

Monday evening I had to deputise for the Mayor at the station when a special train of about 400 returned soldiers from "up north" passed through. The ladies of the town had provided plenty of refreshments for the men, savouries etc. They said they had not been so well treated anywhere in the country. There were eight men got off for Cradock. The train stopped an hour and was due to arrive at Port Elizabeth this morning. We shall be glad when our Cradock boys who are prisoners of war are able to return. There will be some rejoicing then.

We guess Arthur is home for the New Year. I have written to both he and Rex today. We hear that Uncle Owen's daughter, Maude, is likely to be coming down to Redlands about the end of this month. Douglas also hints that he and Evelyn may be taking a holiday this way. Perhaps they are planning a joint trip. We are sorry to hear that Joyce has had an anxious time with Raymond since he has been at Cape Town. He has been troubled with abscesses which have prevented him getting about. Hope to hear he is better soon. Still no news of Dudley. Uncle Jack has at last heard that his son, Hilton, is a P.O.W. in Italy. Very few people have heard any direct news from their relations.

Una Florence (Mrs Shingler) writes that her parents are very cut up at the loss of their son, Ronald, who was killed in action. He has been away from them for many years in Rhodesia. He and Douglas were great pals in Vryburg.

Wednesday morning. Today Norman has a birthday. Hope he has a happy day. I fear my letter will be a day late for which I am sorry. Dot has sent a very happy account of their Xmas doings.

She says it was the happiest Xmas they have spent there. It would be nice if all the family circle could express similar views. They certainly are a very happy crowd in Potgietersrus and all work so nicely together. Norman will be in standard six and Alan in standard three this year.

On New Year's Eve, an old Cradock resident, Mr Jankie, European, whose father used to run a small general dealers shop near J.J. Webber's shop, invited one hundred poor of the town to dinner. He left all the arrangements in the hands of the Salvation Army. They sent out printed invitations and engaged the proprietors of the Victoria Hotel to serve the dinner in their dining room. The Mayor was away on holiday so I was asked to preside. It was a very nice gesture on Mr Janke's part, who resides in Pretoria and came down especially for the occasion. Only 50 attended. Brigadier Clarke of the S.A. from Port Elizabeth came up for the function. Of course a few speeches were made and a photo taken .

Joy Moorcroft is now working in the Land Bank here. They have had another letter from their son who is a P.O.W. in Italy. No one else seems to have had any direct news.

Alison is going down to Bushmans River Mouth today for a change. She it needs badly after all the anxiety they have had over Dorothy's disappointment.

Aunt Eliza is being troubled again with rats in her house. We have not been troubled with them for months.

Later. Alison has gone to Groen Kloof as she could not get accommodation at Bushmans River. A letter from Joyce has come today. She says Raymond is getting better ... [unreadable]

No word from Uitenhage so suppose they found everything in order. Joe is considering putting in an application for the post as Instructor to a Trades School in the O.F.S. but I fear it is too late. The question which weighs with him to a large extent is his pension. If he could get promotion as a charge-man, he would be relieved of the actual forge work but promotion is slow on the S.A.R. Meanwhile he is not getting younger and his health is evidently suffering. I do hope something will turn up that will be suitable for him. The change certainly did him good.

Letter from Dot this morning says they are all going to Magoeberskloof Hotel, Haenertsburg, Northern Transvaal today for a holiday. There is great excitement about it and I hope they have fine weather. I am sure they need a good holiday. They have had a visitor for the boys who have been camping out in a tent in their garden and have had a lovely time. Their neighbours, the Watts, have been away to Johannesburg so Dot has had the job of looking after their place, including white mice, cats, dogs, chickens and 20 pigeons to look after. They are going to try to get through to us by phone on Tuesday evening. Hope they will be successful.

As I write, it seems that a big storm is about to break. We have not had any rain so far this year. We still have plenty of rainwater.

A letter from Joyce also came this a.m. They were looking to go to Gordons Bay today. Raymond was getting over his boils etc.

Also had a long letter from Miss Ruby Adendorf who used to teach music at Vryburg. She sends her greetings to the "girls".

I am afraid there are many items of news which I have not recorded but my memory is not as good as it used to be so must ask to be excused. Hoping that you are all well and that the years end may find us still a united family.

Lots of love to each and all, from
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
As Wednesday January 13th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Monday afternoon 11th. I have just returned from a special Council meeting and a short visit to Aunt Eliza. This is one of the important days in one's life. I suppose the most important as life as we know it then commenced. Several important events have happened on this date (11th). The Vryburg business was bought then, my appointment to the Y.M.C.A. was on this date and if I am not mistaken, the cable to Uncle James that I was coming out to help him in 1887 was dispatched on 11th. I wonder if this year the date will be remembered by another event. On Friday last, a Mr and Mrs Biggs from Grahamstown (I think) called to know if we wanted to sell this house as they had heard that it was so. Joe was saying when here that he thought we should get a smaller place with less worry. On Saturday evening I phoned to Grace as we had not heard from them this week to ascertain if all was well with them. I mentioned the enquiry as well and she said she thought the house was too big. Today I have addressed a letter to Mr Biggs who is staying in town at present and await results. They are some relation to the Graaff Reinet Biggs, cousins I think.

Dorothy phoned from Potgietersrus on Thursday evening about 8.30 saying they were all packed up and ready to start for their mountain holiday early in the morning. They will be back on Thursday. They wished me happy returns of today. Letters also came from Evelyn and Lynne (Douglas wrote a few days ago) also from Ruth and Joe. Grace and Ted sent greeting over the phone when we were talking with them. Telegrams also came from all at Grass Ridge (Vryburg) and also Leslie and Gwen Hudson. Thanks to all of you for your good wishes on entering on the 80th year of my life. I am only 79 at present and do not expect to see many more anniversaries but hope to be of some use to some as long as God spares me. I often feel very useless and would like to do much more than I do. The spirit is willing but the flesh is often weak. Aunt Eliza sent greetings and some scones she had made. Olive also sent some of her famous cookies and some fruit. We have not had any visitors but Mom ordered a cake. No candles. Later. Joan and Christine called in the evening.

I must remind all of you that Douglas and Evelyn celebrate their Silver Wedding 29th. Don't forget. Today is also the tenth anniversary of the passing of Uncle Bert at Cape Town. Am glad to say that Aunt Emmie is getting better of her sprained foot. Joyce and Raymond have gone to Gordons Bay for part of their holiday. Ray seems to be getting the better of his boils. They have not been able to get seats on a train before the first of February owing to the restrictions on travel. So Ray will be late for the opening of school. The same applies to Alan who is going to school at King William's Town. Joyce complains of it having been so cold at Cape Town, she has been sleeping under two blankets, here I have found a sheet sufficient covering.

Douglas and Grace both refer to having had good rains. We need rain very badly. At the special Council meeting this afternoon, we were considering the possibility of having to stop the supply of water for gardening purposes.

Pat and the twins paid us a few minutes call on Friday last. They are staying at Redlands and came down to Uncle Gervase's for a few days. He brought them into town to see Aunt Eliza and us. They had dinner with Aunt Eliza. They have grown tremendously since I saw them last. We understand that all the children are going to boarding school next term and Freda is taking up nursing again in Kimberley. Mary says she is trying to get Miss Wookey, formerly Matron of Kimberley Hospital, to take her place at Sibasa during March when she hopes to come down for a holiday. Dot has asked her to break her journey at Potgietersrus for a day or two. I hope she will be able to do so.

We had a very interesting letter from Miss Ruby Adendorff, who used to teach music at Vryburg. I think Grace or Dot took lessons from her. She has now retired from teaching and is doing a great deal of useful temperance work in and around Cape Town. I have sent the letter to Grace. We also had a letter from Mr Southall who was manager of the Standard Bank in Vryburg and have since retired and is farming in the district. It is nice to be remembered by old friends.

Mrs Derecourt has lost nine of her table boarders when Joe and family left. Another family that was staying there have taken part of a house opposite where we used to live in Bree Street.

They are very nice people and Mom has been to see them. Mrs Derecourt seems in very poor health and should give up and have a long rest. This is easier said than done.

Whilst Joe was here, he phoned to Blodwen's sisters at Cape Town and they enjoyed a good talk. It was a great pleasure to us to hear Grace, Ted and Dot's voices too. It is a little extravagance that we do not often afford.

Let my last word for the day be one of thankfulness for blessings received during all these years. There have been times when life has been far from easy and others when it has been very different. I suppose we all would agree with the foreman who was over me at Stafford Allen & Sons in London who used to say "we ought to have two lives so that we could profit by the experiences of the first". No doubt we all would do many things very differently in the second than we have done in the first. I am very thankful for the experiences I have had.

Tuesday morning. This morning the Library Auditor is going to do my books so shall have to be with him. The Annual Meeting will have to be held this month and I have to prepare the annual report.

On Saturday Olive asked us to have Sunday dinner with her and Uncle Walter. As there was no service that morning – our new minister only arrives this week – so she came for us about ten. We enjoyed the meal, roast fowl that they should have had at Xmas. Had a good sleep after dinner and a spin as far as Sanctuary. Uncle and Olive came and had supper with us which is the first time Uncle has done so. We felt honoured.

Ruth writes that Denis is back at camp. He only had a few days at home and at Fort Hare. He passed through by troop train so we did not see him. It would be Harold's birthday on 16th. He would be 50.

Douglas and Evelyn and Lynne have sent greetings. They have enjoyed having Arthur with them for a few days. He is to have a month's farming leave in February. They say he has put on weight and is looking very well. Uniform suits him. They had quite a number of friends along for a dance etc. They have had good rains in those parts. Douglas and Evelyn went to watch night service and got home about three a.m. Baboons are worry thing them and no cartridges are obtainable so he has to set his trap again.

Grace says the two boys were leaving on Monday for 14 days training at Potchefstroom Camp. Some other boys are also going with them. Ted has been acting Postmaster for a while but there is no news of his being transferred. Grace said over the phone that she did not know of any suitable place vacant suitable for us but we were welcome to go to them when we liked. They have had a very happy New Year holiday. Both the girls have been staying for a week with friends and they only had baby Charles at home.

Aunt Emmie writes that Joyce and Ray cannot get back before February as all trains are booked up to the first of the month.

Wednesday morning. I have not left much room for late news. Our new minister is due tomorrow. The ladies are supplying food for their first meal. No news from the people who are thinking of buying the house.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday January 20th, 1943

My dear All,

The week before our regular Council meeting – the fourth Tuesday in each month – is always a busy time for me with committee meetings preparing the work for the Council. Generally there are eight or more committees in the two days. I am not ex-officio on all committees as I was when Mayor. It takes a good deal of thought and concentration to keep pace with all that is going on. We have been considering, and have decided to recommend to the Ratepayers to embark upon, a water-borne sewage scheme which will be of the greatest benefit to the whole community. It will probably take a couple of years before a start can be made as so many formalities have to be gone through. We have had a deputation from some of the native residents today asking to be allowed to brew their own kaffir beer. All these and other things take time and need careful consideration.

It is Tuesday afternoon and Aunt Jessie and Enid and a Brown of Uitenhage lad staying at Fish River for the holidays, have had supper with us and have just left for home. I don't envy them the motor drive home as the thermometer is standing over 90 in the shade and they have the sun in their eyes all the way home. Aunt Agnes is going to Port Elizabeth next Thursday 28th to see Dr Stewart re her operation on her eyes. They have now had definite news of Hilton. He is a P.O.W. in Italy. I am glad to say that on Thursday, 14th, a printed postcard in Dudley's own writing came to 29 Market Street saying he was safe in Italy, was not wounded, was well cared for and when transferred to another camp, would be able to write and receive letters. This, I think, was dated some time in September. Aunt Eliza sent a wire to Joyce telling her the good news. We all rejoice with Joyce. Dulcie's nephew has arrived home with some others of the First Division from up north.

Wednesday. We received a postcard from Dot on Monday saying they had arrived home safely and enjoyed their holiday. More details no doubt will follow.

I had such a nice birthday letter from Harvey Brown's little girl, Una. She is the one that was crushed under a lot of bags of mealies that the children were swinging on. She will be coming to Rocklands this year.

Grace writes that it has been very quiet without the children but the boys were enjoying the lectures, the food and the experience of camp. The girls were back home, having had a good time. Grace gives us a hearty invitation to go to them if the sale of the house materialises. She mentions a very nice flat near the river where she thinks we would be comfortable etc. So far nothing definite has transpired. The party has seen me two or three times on the subject. They are looking at other propositions and may look at Bladens, which he says is on the market. They are wise to have a good look round before deciding anything. Mom is finding the heat trying her in walking to and from Derecourts and suggest sending for our dinners. I would rather go without a proper mid-day meal and just have some bread and cheese, fruit or something. Olive has suggested a very reliable girl who worked for her at Groenkloof who is looking for work.

It will be Jean's birthday in a few days. I hope she will have a happy day. I must try to write to her. I hope all of you will remember the Silver Wedding Day – 29th – of Douglas and Evelyn. If any of you have forgotten their address, it is Box 8, Vryburg and the telegraph address is Butler, Vryburg. We have had letters from Lynne and Cecily recently. We have also heard from both Mr and Mrs Irons. Mrs Irons was 79 on January 10th. Leslie and Gwen wired congratulations to me for my 80 anniversary.

Rev Briggs arrived on Thursday afternoon. We called to see them on Friday evening. They were at Fish River for service on Sunday morning and gave us a very good service in the evening. They have made a very favourable impression.

Mrs Armstrong and daughter got back from Port Elizabeth on Friday night. We are glad to have them near us again. They are both looking better for their change and have got very sunburned.

Nice long letter from Mary this morning. She is hoping to come down on holiday in March. Sends love to you all and is always interested in your doings. (I send her a copy of dear all every week.)

I cannot attempt to fill this sheet this week as I am not up to concert pitch today.

No news from Uitenhage this week. Hope Blodwen is better. Schools re-open on Monday and then everything will settle down to regular ways for the rest of the year.

We had a quarter of inch of rain so far this year. May we get more soon.

Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday January 27th, 1943

My dear All,

It is not often that I leave it so late before starting my weekly letter but it has been a busy week so far and is likely to remain so, as far as I am concerned. Monday evening I had a library committee meeting when the draft annual report was submitted and the annual financial statement presented. These have never been submitted to the committee before the public meeting, which of course should have been done. They were all passed and on Friday evening, the subscribers will be asked to approve of same.

Last night was the usual monthly meeting of the Council. Fortunately it was not a long one, there being only about 25 items on the agenda. I have been to some trouble to tabulate a number of statistics regarding the work of the Library during past years and it has been very interesting and will make it much easier for successors in office to keep up to date.

One item of news for the week is the Silver Wedding Anniversary of Douglas and Evelyn on Friday, 29th. I hope they will have a very happy day. We are sending a silver spoon that was given to me on Xmas Day 1877 and bears my initials. I cannot recall the occasion or why it was presented to me because I was only thirteen then. I expect my Father gave each of the children one. It is Hall marked silver and I hope it may be of some interest to Douglas and Evelyn. I am sure that both of them have very much to be thankful for in all these years. No doubt there have been difficult times and trials and disappointments to face. We rejoice with them and all the family on this happy occasion. A text comes to mind and I leave it with all of you. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

We let our boy Koos go on Saturday. Mom could not get on with him any longer so we are now without any boy and the girl comes on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. We are managing alright and still have our mid-day meal at Derecourts. We hear through Mrs Derecourt that Blodwen has been in bed for a week. We hope she is better ere this. Perhaps we shall hear from Joe today. We have not had a line from Blodwen since they left on January 2nd. We hope they are all well.

Dorothy wrote a glowing account of their holiday to the Haenertsburg mountains. They were only away a week but thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful scenery and quiet rest. It was a pity they could not have stayed longer.

We hear from the Peagans, who were staying at Derecourts whilst Joe and family were here, that they saw Joe at the Snake Park in Port Elizabeth recently taking cine snaps there. I am sure they will make most interesting pictures.

Lynne writes that they have had very happy time with the children during the holidays. They are now back at school. She went with Douglas to Kimberley with them and one of Frank's children has gone to school there as well. Douglas may be going to Johannesburg soon to see his eye specialist as he want to see him after three months from the operation. Hope there is nothing wrong.

Rev Briggs called on us yesterday afternoon.

We received a Xmas letter from Uncle Willie's son, Phil, this week. [It was dated 27th November. Practically two months to come. So far they have escaped any serious damage from raids.

News has just come over the air of the historic meeting of Roosevelt and Churchill in Casablanca. They are making world history alright. May the war end all the sooner. I do not see how Germany can carry on much longer after suffering such heavy losses as she has been during the past few months.

Later. Letters are to hand from Grace, Joe and Dot. They tell of the children getting ready to go back to school, new books, new teachers, new classes etc. Grace says "her boys" are back from camp and have enjoyed the experience. She is looking forward to next year when they will be earning for themselves. The problem of suitable clothing for the boys owing to their being so tall – both are over 6 feet – is a difficulty. Jean writes that she had a happy birthday and some presents. Joe writes that the snake film was a complete failure – a blank – he thinks something must have

gone wrong with his camera. No mention of Blodwen's health so presume she is better. Hope so at any rate. Dot complains of drought conditions in some parts.

Enid phoned from Fish River that they had had two messages, in writing, one from Cape Town and the other from Johannesburg saying that they had picked up a wireless message from Hilton Collett, giving his number and address from prisoners of war in Italy. Needless to say they are very delighted as for months they did not know if he was dead or alive – simply missing.

Aunt Agnes and Enid are going to Port Elizabeth tomorrow to consult Dr Stewart. We shall see them at the station. Do hope the op will be a success – if it can be performed. Mary refers to excessive heat and need of rain. Aunt Letty is still at the Poplars and does not want to wait for Mary who looks to come down in March. Alice will probably come over and take her Mother back to Graaff Reinet.

Mrs Murray, Dorothy's mother-in-law, is expected today to see the baby. It will be a sad visit. We understand that the poor little thing is also blind. It does seem as though it would be a mercy if it were taken. Ernest is away for a week's holiday. Wish he could have a longer change. Joan has returned to her duties at Cape Town and Christine leaves for her duties at Groet Schuur in a day or so.

Nothing further has transpired re the house business so I suppose the party has not decided anything. I am not worrying about it.

0.30 rain fell just before dinner and more is likely to fall before the day is over.

No time for more this afternoon so will say goodbye for the present.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday February 3rd, 1943

My dear All,

We had a most interesting afternoon last Saturday. Aunt Letty came along to afternoon tea and it had been arranged that she and Mom should go and see Aunt Charlotte again but as Aunt Letty was feeling tired and did not want to walk back, I suggested getting Aunt Charlotte here. So I sent a taxi to fetch her and she also stayed to supper. Aunt Jessie also came in to do some shopping with Uncle Norman and Gladys and her sister – who is very deaf. They also wanted to go to the pictures in the evening so Aunt Jessie stayed and had supper with us as well. So there were the three old ladies all over 80 and myself. Gladys and her sister did not come into the house but just called on their way to bio. I think the ladies all enjoyed themselves and had a good old talk. We had had a letter from Miss Enser from Australia the same morning so that gave them more interest still. It was all so unarranged that there was not time to get Uncle Walter and Olive down or it would have been nice to have all four of those over 80 together. We sent Aunt Charlotte back by taxi. Aunt Letty does like our bath and so stayed to have a hot bath before returning to the Poplars. She is looking to go out to Grass Ridge next Friday as Aunt Katie has to come in for some meeting that day. Aunt Katie says she has not been to town for a month owing to petrol shortage. Perhaps, if there is room, we might also go with them but no plan had been made. Olive has not been well and doctor says she ought to have an operation on her nose which has been troubling for some years. She has a rash on her face and arms at present but she may go next week. Mrs Ted Gilfillan of Conway has had to go to the coast on account of her heart and would like Olive to go and stay at Conway with Uncle Walter to be company for Mr Gilfillan. They are very old friends.

We are hoping soon to hear how Douglas and Evelyn's Silver Wedding Anniversary passed off. We had letters from Evelyn and Lynne. Arthur is expected home today – Tuesday – for a month's farming leave. They are greatly rejoiced. The two younger children are back at school in Kimberley and seem very happy there. Douglas may have to go to Johannesburg again about his eyes. We do not know if there is anything wrong again. I hope not. He is trucking more oxen for sale. They are needing rain again.

Joyce Townshend is expected back tonight. I shall probably go to meet her. Aunt Eliza has kept very well all the time she has been away. For the last few mornings I have been going to the station carrying a basket of figs for the troops travelling down by the 9.30 train. The basket gets very heavy by the time I get there. They are greatly enjoyed by the soldiers they tell me. The grapes seem very backward this season, none of them are approaching ripeness yet. The will be the next thing to take over for the troops. Mrs Armstrong is expecting her husband back with the next convoy but does not know when that will be.

Did I tell you what Uncle Walter did some weeks ago? He climbed onto a table on his front stoep without the aid of a chair or anything and got down a bird's nest from the bush. Olive says she does not know how he did it but he did not fall or anything.

News has come through that Joyce's sister, Muriel Wells, has another son, born on Monday 1st at Maritzburg. Dorothy Murray's baby is still alive. They fear that in addition to other defects, the poor little mite is blind, at any rate in one eye. Her mother-in-law from East London has been on a couple of days visit to see her. We are all very sorry for her.

Jeffrey has, we understand, now passed his M.Sc. exam and returned home from Rhodes University on Saturday last and has now gone to Bloemfontein to enlist. Ernest has been away on holiday at Bushmans River and is not expected back for a few days.

The Library annual meeting passed off alright. Unfortunately the attendance was very disappointing, only ten members turning up out of a membership of about 300. Of course that can be interpreted as a mark of confidence in the Committee of management.

A social to welcome the new minister and his wife is being held on Wednesday evening. We all like him so far. He is certainly very earnest.

Wednesday morning early. Joyce's train was nearly two hours late last night. Fortunately having the telephone, I was able to find out when it was likely to arrive which it did about 20 to twelve. We did not know for certain if they were on the train but they were. I had seen Aunt Eliza during

the evening and told her I would meet her but when I did meet her, Mr Thomas had found her already. Yesterday was very hot, 96 in the shade and it was terribly close all night. Perhaps it will rain today. Hope so.

We have not replaced Koos yet and don't suppose we shall. It is awkward not getting the furrow water in the garden and the hour in the morning and hour in the afternoon with the hose is not much good, but it is the best we can do.

The second crop of figs are very nice. I take a basket full to the station *[unreadable]* We had another enquiry for the house this week but Mom does not want to sell it. A much less favourable property was sold on Saturday for £1275. Cups and saucers were sold at the same sale for 6/- each. Some price.

Miss Metcalf came along last evening and brought her Women's Auxiliary Cash Book – she is treasurer this year – for me to balance for her and agree with the bank book. I am returning it this morning.

Later. Letters have come from Douglas, Grace and Dot wishing Mom many happy returns of her 81st anniversary. All very welcome. Douglas says they did not feel justified in having any “celebrations” for their Silver Wedding, but spent the day quietly. Arthur is home for a month and there is lots of work to be done. Lynne is of course at home and is bright.

Grace enclosed a letter from each of the boys written when in camp. They have enjoyed the experience and no doubt will do well when needed. Dot is taking on a new responsibility. A very poor family in their town is in difficulties. Husband in hospital, wife is enlisting for war work, three children, one is being taken by Mrs Watts, another by Mrs van Rensburg, both next door neighbours to Dot, and Dot is taking the youngest, a boy of 2½ so the three children will be all close to each other. They are very plucky. Hope it will work out alright. Dot says it may be for a year or two. She has sent me particulars regarding the milk treatment which apparently has done both her and Reg good. I do not know if I will try it. Ruth writes that Denis is looking forward to two weeks leave in April. She sends birthday greetings to Mom. Aunt Letty will come to morning tea tomorrow. We are asking Mrs Armstrong and Mrs Briggs and Mr as well. Aunt Letty has cried off going to Grass Ridge on Friday and so perhaps we may go instead. We have not had any ... *unreadable]*

return and of course we will leave directions for our post to be sent on. I shall take some work to do, if we do go.

Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

Evelyn & Lynne & Norman and Alan also wished Mom.

Grass Ridge, Fish River
as Wednesday February 10th, 1943

My dear All,

Well here we are. We arrived about 7 p.m. on Friday. Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate came in, in the morning, a little late as they had a puncture on the way. Aunt Kate had a meeting of the Women's Emergency League at eleven and had arranged to take Aunt Letty back as she had only been to Grass Ridge for Xmas Day but Aunt Letty did not feel equal to it. She has had some pain in one of her legs lately – perhaps she has done too much walking – and said she would rather stay put and rest. She is expecting Alice to come and fetch her about the 20th on her way back from Bushmans River Mouth where she has been spending a holiday. Aunt Letty is anxious to get back to Graaff Reinet. We thought she would have waited for Mary who is expected down on holiday about March. She has seen most of her brother and sisters in their homes. Uncle Owen is going to Cradock this week to see her and will bring Thera as far as Orchards where she will stay with Rouena for a month or more. Beryl is expected back from Humansdorp and will meet her father at Cradock and return to Rooispruit together. I do not know if we shall see them as we are not likely to be back home before then. In fact, Aunt Jessie wants us to stay at Saltpansdrift for a while but we have not made any plans in that direction yet. Uncle Dudley has to be in town on Friday next to see about getting new tyres as his are about finished. He has to drive very slowly in order to preserve them.

We saw Aunt Jessie, and Rouena and Uncle Gervase and Mrs D Seller at the shop at the station. Mrs Seller has stored her furniture in Port Elizabeth and is travelling round for six months visiting her relations. She is as lively as ever. She wants to come to Cradock for a fortnight. Rev Briggs was the best man at her wedding and brought her husband by car from Maclear and stayed at Rooispruit on the way. I should have mentioned that Kate's stepmother was with us in the car and is staying for the rest of the summer at Grass Ridge. She is also over 80. I am glad Uncle Dudley has the wireless here so we are able to keep in touch with the outside world. I am writing this on Monday before breakfast. We heard of the safe arrival of Winston Churchill back in London last evening and were thankful that he had returned from his wanderings. He is a wonderful man. We are occupying what is called the boys' room and that is where I am typing. The sun rose exactly at seven and is shining squarely onto the table by the window. The glare is rather trying but it will soon be off the table.

On Saturday I did a few little jobs about the house for Aunt Kate. One was to take off one of the doors of the sideboard cupboard and pack the hinge so that the door would shut properly. Another and harder job was to fix four iron brackets I had had made some months ago to strengthen the long dining room table. I noticed on several occasions that the legs nearest the kitchen door were out of plumb so I got a blacksmith to make four brackets to fit. The table legs were very hard wood and it was an awkward job. However got it done but not without a couple of nasty blisters in the palm of my right hand. Uncle Dudley of course helped me. Perhaps I did a little too much as I was very tired all day yesterday but am glad to say I am feeling better this morning. Aunt Kate phoned to Aunt Jessie to come up to dinner on Sunday so she and Mr Barnes spent the rest of the day with us. We enjoyed a good deal of music during the day. They left shortly after supper and we spent the time in writing letters. I am now typing on the back stoep, facing the garden. Mom is peeling apples and Mrs Jubb is knitting beside her. The electric light engine is charging the batteries which is a pretty noisy operation. Mrs Jubb always has her breakfast in bed and it is getting near to morning tea. It is a perfect day so far and I guess it will be oppressively hot by the time the afternoon comes.

I have forgotten to mention that on Friday Mom had a wire from Douglas wishing her greetings for her birthday and saying he was going to phone on Saturday evening as well. So I managed to arrange with the Postmaster to switch us through to Grass Ridge as of course the house would be shut up. So about quarter to nine, sure enough the phone rang and we were through to Vryburg. Unfortunately the hearing was not at all good at first and then we heard someone chip in and he made the reception rather better. Of course we recognised Douglas' voice. We understood him to say that Evelyn and Lynne were at the bio and he was going there too; that someone was

very ill – we presumed it was Mr Collen – as we had heard in a recent letter that he was not well; that Arthur, who was expected home last Tuesday, had not arrived as his month's leave had been cancelled; and that it was very dry and they needed rain badly. He said it was difficult to hear us and so, much shouting. It was very nice to hear his voice and I hope the cost of the call was not excessive. It is very wonderful when you come to think of the distance and compare it with what it was 55 years ago when I first came to South Africa. It was still more wonderful to hear the engine of the train in which Winston Churchill was arriving at Paddington Station on his return from Egypt etc.

I want to get my letter ready for posting tomorrow – Tuesday morning – as Uncle is sending cream to the station in the morning so I hope you will get my letter in the usual time.

You will be glad to know that Aunt Agnes has had the first operation on her eye. The second will be done in about ten days time. Enid went with her and went out to Uitenhage and stayed a night or two with Mrs Weavers. She went to see Joe and Blodwen one evening. She phoned from Fish River when she got home and told us that Joe was looking far from well. He was working overtime as well. I do wish something could be done about it.

Aunt Letty, Rev and Mrs Briggs, Joyce, Mrs Hultzer, old Mrs Wilson, Miss Loscombe, Olive, Mrs Armstrong came to see Mom on her birthday. Everybody was very nice and she had a few presents. I took Mr and Mrs Briggs after morning tea to see Uncle Walter and Olive.

Later. I have just been reading one of my Mother's letters to me, written on my 34th birthday. Uncle Joe and Sophia had just returned from their visit to the Cape and had left me very ill. Mother did not think I should get better. What a change has taken place now 45 years ago.

Later. I have brought out with me some of my Mother's letter to re-read and destroy. The first one that I read was dated on my 34th birthday, 1898, just after my brother Joe and wife had returned from his first visit to South Africa. I had been very ill during their visit and Mother was very concerned about me. In the letter she says she hoped eggs were not 6 pence each as they were in Grahamstown when Uncle James was so ill. She also refers to the photos of joint families and refers to Harold and Douglas. Mother never thought that I should make old bones. I have also re-read the first postcard that I wrote after leaving London to Mother as we went round the coast. I feel very reluctant to destroy these and other letters but there seems no good purpose in saving them longer.

It has been a very windy day, a little thunder was heard this afternoon but no rain fell. Uncle is sending down for post tomorrow morning so I must close my letter this evening. We shall be playing "can you go" presently so will close with love to all and thanks for all your good wishes for now and hoping you will get this in usual course. Your letters to us will no doubt be delayed as they go to Cradock first and come out here the next day. The news over the air is still good.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

At Grass Ridge, Fish River
as Wednesday February 17th, 1943

My dear All,

I am starting early this week as I do not know for certain when we shall get home and there may not be much time for writing when we do get back. It is Friday afternoon – nearly tea time – and it is very dusty outside and consequently no inducement to be out. Besides Uncle Dudley went to town alone this morning and has not yet returned. I am sitting by the window in the spare room, that large room beyond the drawing room which so many of the family have occupied from time to time. It was a very misty morning when I rose which generally betokens great heat, but it has not been so very oppressive. The travelling threshing machine has been here three days and has just left for Trollip's farm at the dam. He has threshed 250 bags of wheat here and it has been interesting watching it work. He travels from farm to farm by tractor which draws the machine and, also works it when threshing. It travels at about the rate of five miles an hour and is driven by a native boy. The outfit is under the charge of a white man who has to be put up by the farmer and fed. The machine is capable of threshing from 200 to 250 bags per day under favourable conditions. Here he took longer as Uncle had his lands in different parts of the farm and not only so but had his stacks scattered about the lane instead of all being on one large stack. This meant that the wagons had to ride the sheaves to the machine in some cases and in others, the machine moved to different parts of the lands. The owner of the machine charges 1/9 for every bag threshed which I calculate must pay him very well. The machine is driven on paraffin and the man told me he can grind about 20 to 30 bags on a gallon of oil. The man in charge earns from 30/- to 40- per day. I was surprised to learn from Uncle Dudley that he intended to burn the chaff.

There was heavy mist this morning and the sun has hardly shone at all today but the wind has been, and still is, most unpleasant. We cannot see the "Three Sisters" kopje from the stoep. Uncle will have a very unpleasant drive home. He is all alone.

We are going down to Saltpansdrift tomorrow as it is tennis afternoon at the station. We look to return home on Tuesday morning either by car or train.

Each evening since we have come here all of us have played "can you go"? It is played with Lexicon cards and is quite good fun. It is a trial of finding letters to fit into words that have been played on the table.

Did I tell of the hail storm we had on Tuesday afternoon. It was quite unexpected and did not last very long but the ground was white in a few minutes. The wind was fairly strong and it was thought wise to hang a blanket outside the spare room window which was exposed to the violence of the storm. Fortunately no windows were broken but the fruit trees and flower garden suffered considerable damage. Mom has been helping peeling and drying some of the apples which were bruised.

We had letters from Grace and Dot this week. Grace has three of the children in the high school and they are at an expensive age. Servants are still a trouble and difficult to obtain. Dot says the baby they have taken under their care is very good, sleeps all through the night and is very happy with them. The boys are quite fond of the little chap.

Mrs Jubb is always busy knitting or tatting. She makes doll dresses etc and is very interested in war news. She is not able to walk much and has her breakfast in bed. She has given Mom a tatting shuttle which she bought in Australia many years ago. She has been married twice but never had any family.

Mom's feet have been troubling her ever since we came. I do not know if it is a touch of gout – poor man's variety – or what. Shall let Dr see her when we get home. Saturday February 13th. It is quite cold this morning after all the wind of yesterday. Am glad to have my warm clothing on. Mom is sorry she has not a warm dress with her but as the sun is well up, it will soon be warm enough. I am sat by the open window in the spare room. We leave for Saltpansdrift just after dinner.

Amongst the various jobs I have been doing these days was the repairing of the drawing room sofa, the springs of which have been loose for some years. The suite was bought from us when we left Cradock for £5. It belonged to old Mrs Trollip and I bought it when we started

housekeeping. It is old fashioned but still in fair order. Aunt Katie helped me. Some of the strips of webbing were broken and most of the springs in consequence were loose. However managed to get them fairly into position and the result was that the sofa is much more comfortable than it was before. It has the same covering on as when it was ours. The rest of the suite is in good order and Katie says when the war is over, she will recover it all. Another sofa, in the spare room, had a leg off and was supported on three bricks. After a deal of hard work and some assistance from the man in charge of the threshing machine, we managed to get the leg screwed on again and is now good for a number of years.

I brought out my rainfall returns for Cradock which go back for 65 years and brought them up to date. It is interesting to know that the average over this long period of years is over 13 inches per annum. I very much doubt if there are many other towns in the Union that have such a complete record.

Another job I have also tackled which has been very interesting – to me at any rate – has been rereading some of my Mother's letters of bygone days. The oldest is dated 13/4/1875 addressed to "my darling boy" evidently the day after I had gone back to boarding school or more likely after she had been down to see us at the school as we only had holidays every six months. I went to boarding school a few days before I was nine and had never been away from home before. Another was dated 21/9/1896 in which she refers to a postcard from me stating the Mom had contracted measles from Harold, and Douglas. Strange to say, Mom does not remember having measles. Another dated 26/3/1897 refers to my illness when Uncle James returned from England, accompanied by Uncle Joe and Aunt Sophia. I had pneumonia and pleurisy then. Uncle Joe came out for his health and had intended to go to Johannesburg – on business – but he considered I was too ill to be left as I found out afterwards. He did not expect me to recover. I could not even talk to him I was so ill. Another dated January 1898 says Joe and Sophia were expected back from South Africa the following day.

One written on my 34th birthday (11/1/1898) after Joe and :Sophie had returned, refers to the photographs taken in front of Aunt Letties's house in Bree Street where the two families were together. I was looking an awful wreck – in health – and Mother was very upset at the sight. She also refers to Uncle James being so ill in Grahamstown (1875 or thereabouts) when milk was six pence a pint and butter was unobtainable, or green vegetables, owing to the severe drought at that time. I am not keeping these longer but am glad to have had the opportunity of re-reading them. I also have some of the verses she wrote from time to time which I shall keep most likely in my writing album or may even use some for my Xmas card greetings.

We have had a very nice restful time here, have not been anywhere and no one has been to see us. We have had many laughs at some of the stories of the old home and happenings told by Mom and Uncle Dudley. I have not done any work in the workshop this time. The sorting out of the old scrap iron, which I commenced doing when here last time, is just as I left it then. The workshop is very dusty and I have not felt like tackling it this time. I have not had occasion to take any of my heart medicine and am feeling all the better for the change. I must not forget to mention the number of cats they have at Grass Ridge. One family is specially favoured, a mother cat and her two babies. She is certainly a very pretty animal and the baby is also beautifully marked. The ex-baby is not so pretty but is still a baby in his attachment to its mother. All three are very playful and are allowed to scamper all over the place. The way Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate and Mrs Jubb fondle the baby is most interesting. They watch almost every movement and talk to them and feed them is astonishing. The baby is to be given away next week and one is inclined to think it will be missed almost as much as if a child had died. What would it be like if a real child was born into the family it could hardly have greater interest showered upon it.

It is now February 14th and Uncle Herbert would have been 85 today. It is a beautiful day, not too warm, in fact it was quite cool when we rose this morning. We came down to the station yesterday afternoon to watch the tennis. The number of players was smaller than usual as a number of the remaining men are in training camp in Cradock for actual training in C.P.S. work for ten days or so. Rev and Mrs Briggs came out from town to play and both of them showed very good form. Aunt Katie and Enid were responsible for the catering – afternoon tea and cake for War Funds –

which was much appreciated. Enid is going to Port Elizabeth on Tuesday to be with Aunt Agnes for her second operation on her eye. We are glad to know that Dr Stewart says she will have her sight restored. Enid was much amused at Uitenhage when at Joe's. Roy wanted to lend his popgun so that she could shoot a springbok for him when she came home. He said he could get some bullets for her. However I think she is going to take him a piece of biltong, which no doubt will please them all. I took the opportunity, while watching the tennis, of reading Churchill's speech in the House of Commons on the war situation which was very comprehensive. That, together with what we heard of Roosevelt's speech over the radio in the morning, shows in no unmistakable way what the United Nations are out to accomplish. I still think that the war may be over earlier than many expect. The losses the Germans are suffering must surely cause them to crack.

Later. Mr Barnes has taken Aunt Jessie, Mom and I to see Winnie and Harvey Brown and the baby. We had never seen their new house which is as different from their old one as anything could be. Harvey did all the woodwork and much of the mason work himself and has made a most creditable job of it all. It is conveniently arranged from a domestic point of view and very substantially built. The outside walls are double, or as they are called "hollow" so that there is free passage of air of the house between the two walls. This is to give coldness in summer and warmth in winter. Air bricks are placed all round in the outside walls which can be closed or opened according to the state of the outside atmosphere. The ceilings are beaver boards and walls cement plastered inside and out. When he can afford it, he will install electric light. He has a fair supply of water from a borehole and of course catches all the rain that falls. They will have a nice garden too in time. Harvey is one of the head men in the O.F.S. in camp but he managed to come home this afternoon for a few hours and brought his daughter Una and two of her friends from Rocklands School. They have to both be in before nine this evening. The baby is a fine little girl nearly seven months old. Winnie, you will remember, was poisoned a few years ago by eating what she thought was a mushroom. She seems to be alright now except she has not the full use of her right hand and cannot wash her baby.

We called at Orchards on the way back and found Uncle Gervase and Pam, who is on 14 days leave and has been down here to see us. Roslin, who has been laid up for a while has returned to her duties at Cape Town. Little Hope is growing quite fast now. Of course she goes to school at the station here. Mrs Seller as gone to Rooispruit and from there goes on to Johannesburg to visit some of her relations. Uncle Owen is, we hear, coming to Cradock this week to see Aunt Lettie. Beryl is back at home now.

Aunt Jessie had another fall a few days ago in crossing the furrow but fortunately she was not hurt, just grazed her shin. She has a very lonely time here very often but is always busy. Her fowls take up a lot of time and attention. She gathers the eggs herself and I see to the selling of them when they arrive in town. They have not been cheap this season as there is such a great demand. All the boarding houses and hotels are more or less full. They seldom go lower than 1/6 a dozen.

I find that we can buy certain lines in groceries here that we cannot get in Cradock, such as post toasties, tinned pilchards, Tweespruit cheese etc. I don't know why. Another thing we notice is that we have not heard a single mosquito since we left town. We are not grumbling about it but it is a fact all the same. Flies too are almost unknown at Grass Ridge but are plentiful enough here. February is always considered the hottest month of the year. We have had some hot days and some nights have been very close, so much so that even a sheet has been a burden. On the other hand, there have been many quite cold days and nights. We have even asked for extra blankets.

I hope there will be a nice lot of post for us when we get home on Tuesday. Monday 15th. I went to the station this morning with Mr Barnes in his old Ford car which is a bit of ancient history. There I saw Willie Saunders – little Willie as he used to be called. He is still on active service – in the Air Force stationed at Roberts Heights. He is looking very well but not as stout as he used to be in Vryburg. He is on three weeks leave and has brought his daughter, 7½ years old to school at his brother's farm at Knutsford. He enquired after all of you. His home is still at Naboomspruit. Bertie Trollip and is wife of Beaconsfield farm, Schoombie, was also on his way to Highlands for dinner. He has sold his farm and is going to live on a farm near Walmer, a property belonging to his wife's people. He wants to put his children to school there. One of Aunt

Jessie's maids this morning, in screwing down a bottle of tomato jam she had made, used such force that the neck of the two pound bottle broke in her hand and cut her hand very badly between the thumb and forefinger. It was a long time before we could stop it bleeding. We used iodine, bandages etc. At last I fixed a tourniquet round her wrist, using a piece of a mealie cob and bandage for the purpose. When Mr Barnes came in, he had some turpentine and at last it stopped. Aunt Jessie thinks the girl must have lost a pint of blood, it just squirted out. I think it might have been a cup full, but it looked pretty serious, being in such a dangerous place. It should be a lesson to always protect one's hand with a towel when working with bottles. I have been busy screwing up Aunt Jessie's wardrobe, the door of which was not working properly. I don't think I have made much of a success of it. Aunt Gladys Norman has recently lost the service of her cook who has worked for her for twenty years. The cook's son was convicted of stock theft and she was implicated in the matter, having cooked some of the meat.

Mom has brought some needlework from Winnie's and has been working at that all day. I see there is no room for more but may add a "supplement" when we get home. There was no post this morning.

Lots of love to all of you from
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday February 24th, 1943

My dear All,

I am very glad that I commenced my last week's dear all when I did, otherwise I am sure I should not have got very far with it if I had waited until we got home. Of course there was no servant and we had not made any definite arrangements about meals. We brought butter and eggs with us so we were alright as we always keep spare tinned food in case of visitors turning up unexpectedly. When we knew that Mrs Derecourt had been very ill whilst we had been away so we decided that we would not go up to her as it would only increase the work. We have managed alright so far but I am not in favour of continuing getting our own mid-day meal unless it is just bread and butter or such like. Then of course it might not be good for us as we should not be getting anything in the way of vegetables which we are told is essential for good health. However we shall see what plan to make. In addition Mom's feet have been giving trouble. She has a new pair of shoes which are easier and I hope our fears of poor man's gout may be groundless. She walked to church on Sunday evening without serious difficulty but standing about in the kitchen seeing to cooking our mid-day meal will not do. Our wash girl – or rather a substitute – turned up as the original one was ill in hospital. We hear she is suffering from dropsy. Yesterday – Sunday – Olive called with the car on her way to Conway with Uncle Walter where they may stay for a few weeks. Mrs Gilfillan is away at the coast on account of heart trouble and Uncle and Mr Gilfillan are very old friends so we hope this arrangement will be mutually satisfactory. Olive has asked us to have her garden boy for three days a week and he is to look after her garden the other three days. He had been working here today and the garden has had a thorough soaking from the main furrow. He has also taken over a basket of grapes for the troops passing through the station and has picked more for tomorrow morning.

Another reason I am glad I did not delay with my letter is that the day before we returned home, the organisers of the anti-waste exhibition phoned out to Fish River asking me to come in time to officially open it as the Mayor was away in Cape Town. So I was at the hall early to have a look round before eleven. It was certainly a most interesting show of what can be done with a lot of things which in the ordinary way would be thrown away. I understand from the organisers that the show is being taken to all the towns in the Union so no doubt all of you will be able to see it for yourselves. I am sending a copy of the Midland News report round and I hope you will be interested. Aunt Eliza and Joyce were at the opening but Mom did not feel equal to going so I took her up by taxi in the afternoon. Aunt Hettie was also there then. This meant that there was no time for writing on that day. However I sent you a four page letter which I hope was of some interest to you.

Tuesday morning. Aunt Emmie is 77 today. She has now taken a small house close to where she was staying before and seems very comfortable. She has a retired school mistress sharing the house so will not be alone. We all hope that she will long be spared to enjoy the comfort. Muriel and baby are doing well at Maritzburg.

On Friday morning just after breakfast, Mary Collett – Ethnie's sister – blew in to say that she and her mother and brother, who is down from up north on leave, and a sister-in-law and two of her children and a Mrs Van Ryneveld – daughter of Rev G.P. Fergusson, had come to town for the day to do some shopping. They also had a nurse girl and two other maids with them. Ten souls in all. They did not all stay to dinner – only Mrs Harry did but we had all of them to supper. They came by lorry, Mary doing the driving. We were interested in hearing that Ethnie, who stayed with us for about three months when I was so blind, has a daughter about 15 months old now. Her husband is still up north and has not seen his baby. They were all very jolly and left about eight or nine p.m. Harry Collett did not come. He was away visiting the other daughter, Vickey, who lives at Komga. You may remember that just before we came back to Cradock, Mary brought her father to Cape Town for an operation and two cancers were removed from him. Since then he has been wonderfully well, climbs windmills, builds, ploughs and works hard on the farm. All doctors are surprised at his vigour. He is a few years younger than me. We have stayed at their farm.

Douglas writes that he finds he cannot judge sizes and measurements as he used to do before his operation. I found the same difficulty, all doors and windows seemed to be on a curve. I do not notice it now and hope Douglas will soon find his sight is normal. He has been fixing up a cart for use, owing to petrol shortage I suppose. We are sorry to hear that his neighbour, T.B. Collen, has been ill. Lynne has been over there helping Mrs Collen in the house. Lynne has been having a series of injections for chronic colds and the doctor says she should be free of these for a year. She weighed one of their bunches of grapes and it scaled 2½ lbs. Am glad to hear she has been playing tennis again. They were all very disappointed that Arthur's leave was cancelled, so they had a night journey to meet him for nothing. The latest we heard was that he has been transferred to camp at Johannesburg and hopes to get leave from there.

I am sorry to see by the Stellander that Rupert de Beer has one of his sons reported as missing as a result of air operations on January 30th. He had only two sons and he lost his wife some years ago. I have written to him.

I also see that Wouter Steenkamp has passed away. I wonder what his English wife will do. Perhaps she will want to go back home. I think she has a couple of children.

Joe writes that he has seen Aunt Agnes in the nursing home in Port Elizabeth – she is getting her sight back. Enid will stay with her until she can return home. They will spend a night here. Joe had some visitors recently and amongst them was Mr and Mrs Bentley of Kimberley. Joe was at De Beers with Mr Bentley who afterwards went to Vryburg as a plumber and knows Douglas. He married a Miss Robinson of Vryburg who remembers Grace and Dot at school. Wonder if either remember them. I was glad to read the other day that the Minister of Railways admitted in Parliament that the Railway men were being worked too hard. I hope that this will mean that Joe will have an easier time shortly. It is a mistake to work overtime continuously as no one can keep it up and do good work.

Grace is having continued trouble with servants. Living out of town, I suppose may make it more difficult. Her nerves get very strained at times.

Dot's semi adopted baby is suffering from boils, so I have sent her some medicine which Joyce used for Raymond and I hope it will be effective. She remarks upon the fact that so many of the bank officials up there – and probably it also applies elsewhere – who have Afrikaans names are so thoroughly English. One used to be pretty safe in determining the political views of people by their surname. It certainly does not apply now.

We have experienced a succession of hot days recently, 102, 101, 98, and 100 in the shade have been registered. Last night about 11 it started raining and today (Tuesday) it is delightfully cool. I took a basket of grapes to the station this morning. They are ripening nicely now. I called to enquire how Mrs Derecourt is. She is very ill and can hardly speak. I do not think she will ever get up again. I am glad to say that Mom's feet seem a little easier but are far from well.

It is almost dark now at 6 a.m. and we are changing our meal hour as far as possible. News comes over at 7, water leading from the taps is from 7 to 8 and we find that all these coming together makes a big rush. News from London also comes over at 7.30 so we are trying to arrange to have breakfast at 8.30 instead of 8. It is also awkward in the evening, water is available for an hour 5 to 6 just at the time news from England comes on, so we shall try to have supper at about 7 instead of 6. There is very little watering can be done in an hour with a half inch hose and low pressure, especially in a garden the size of ours. Of course many gardens are larger still.

During our absence in the country, we have had installed a sink away pit for slop and kitchen water. The pit is 12 feet long by 4 ft wide and three feet deep and was filled in with large rubble stones and covered with iron and 18 inches of soil on top. It is answering quite well and saves the nuisance of the Municipal slop men calling every day.

Will you note the following changes of address: Mrs Fear, Green Gables, Derry Road, Rondebosch, Cape. Eric Fear, 16 Belgrave Road, Kimberley.

Perhaps I will not be able to add tomorrow so goodbye,

Love to all, Dad

Evelyn's birthday on Friday 26th

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 3rd, 1943

My dear All,

It is Tuesday afternoon and in a few minutes I am being fetched to go to the gaol – not as a prisoner I am thankful to say – but to witness a demonstration of disinfecting in connection with serious diseases. Will tell you more about it when I return.

We could not understand why it was that we did not hear from Dot last week until Saturday when we received her usual letter on Saturday and found it had been opened by the Censor – and passed without any deletions. Mom had a birthday letter posted in Cradock on February 3rd which only reached her on 10th, having been sent away and passed by Censor. It was from Aunt Charlotte. Talking of delays, we have not had any overseas papers at the Library for over nine weeks and letters have been arriving dated October and November. Some boats have gone to the bottom. One firm in town this week showed me some goods which they had just received which had been lying at the docks in Scotland since 1941 and now they had arrived without any invoices or shipping documents. They had given up hopes of ever seeing the goods but of course were glad to get them even so late. We must not complain as after all, South Africa is not feeling the inconvenience of war anything like as much as some countries. Eggs locally are 2/6 to 3/- per dozen and we hear that many farmers are killing off their poultry because they cannot purchase food for them. By the way, we noticed that chicken appeared on the menu at the Premier on Sunday. Talking of the Premier, we started having our mid-day meals there on Friday. Mrs Derecourt had to be removed to hospital the day before and is only just living. We expect to hear of her passing at any time. Mom and Mrs Rainier – who was boarding at Mrs Derecourt's, are going up to see her this afternoon. Her house is closed up now. We are fairly well satisfied with our meals. They give us a variety, soup, two choices of meals and plenty of vegetables. We get served at 12.30 and get back in time for 1.30 news. Mrs McLeod returned to Cradock on Friday and is staying there so we see a good deal of her. She is company for Mom, too, when I am out. Mrs Rainier is also staying there now. There are a number of French refugees or evacuees staying there from Madagascar, India, China etc for whom the Government pay. The Premier as recently been sold to the Auctioneer and he tells me he would have given me a good price for the piece of garden which is just at the back of the Premier. Ernest has bought about 1500 clinker bricks which I took out of the ground as he wants to build another garage at the Poplars.

Guy Butler and his wife are in town on leave, Guy has been promoted to Captain. Jeffrey has signed on also, having passed his B.Sc. Ruth writes that she hopes Denis will get embarkation leave before he is drafted up north. He has signed on to go anywhere in the world if needed. We shall hope to see him again before he goes. His fiancée's mother is in St Joseph's Nursing Home at present. Dorothea is back at Rhodes University.

I weighed myself as usual at the beginning of the month and find I am still holding my own at 146 lbs. On 22/10/1940 I was 157. Mom has not weighed herself since that date when she was 170.

Mr Dodd dropped in this morning for a chat. We have not seen him for some months, Mrs Dodd for a long time longer. They are both looking to go to Cape Town for a few months as Mrs Dodd's sister, Mrs Stegmann, is ill at Muizenberg and needs her help. Nessie is doing very well at her farming now. They have had hard times for some years and am glad that the tide has now turned. Her oldest daughter is now at school in Queenstown. Her son has now left school and is a great help to her on the farm. Amongst other things, she specialises in honey. Dot says Mr Watts, her neighbour, is wanting honey in quantities.

Grace says she is contemplating the plot next to theirs. I hope they may be successful in striking water if they do buy.

Joe writes that he is acting charge-man as one of the men has gone on pension. This means easier work for Joe, for which I am very glad, as it will relieve him of his furnace work for the time-being. Hope he gets the permanent appointment. He has worked very hard.

We shall soon be having Easter here, although it is as late as it can ever be. Will any of you be coming to pay us a visit? Needless to say you will be very welcome.

Douglas sends a postcard to say that Arthur arrived on 26th on 21 days' leave. He has signed on for service anywhere and we all hope he comes through safely. Douglas and Evelyn are not having any Silver Wedding festivities until after the war and they are all home together.

Denis was one of the first at Potchefstroom to sign on for service anywhere. Ruth expects that he will be sent overseas. He is a fully fledged officer now. The Eastern Province Herald has discontinued the social column to which Ruth used to contribute, which means some financial loss to her. Paper shortage is the cause. Most papers are suffering from the same cause.

So we are to pay more postage from April 1st. I don't think anyone should complain on that score. Our telephone accounts and railway travelling is also to be increased. I hope none of the circle will be inconvenienced by the increases in smokes and liquor.

Alan and Alice and their daughter, Winifred, arrived last Wednesday afternoon and left the next morning for home taking Aunt Letty with them. Alan seems quite well and is able to walk without crutches or stick. Winifred is a nice girl and is hoping to get an appointment at Cape Town as a teacher in a Boxton Home for young children. It has been very nice seeing so much of Aunt Lettie. She has been about in the town and district for about three months. She has seen all the family except Aunt Rose and Uncle Owen. She says she will come again. Mary is expected on a month's holiday about the end of March but will go to Graaff Reinet first. We hope she will break her journey at Dot's on the way down. We are expecting to hear soon when Aunt Agnes will be coming back. The arrangement is for Enid to bring her as far as here by a day train and sleep the night and Uncle Jack will fetch them by car later on. Am glad Joe went to see her whilst in the nursing home.

Later. I got back safely from the gaol. The de-vermin-ising of clothing, blankets etc from typhus cases was interesting. A powerful blow lamp is employed to heat a drum containing nine gallons of water to over 200 degrees. The steam thus generated is passed through to a barrel in which about 20 or more blankets are placed and the lid is screwed down tightly for about a quarter of an hour and the trick is done. The blankets are quite dry and clean when taken out of the barrel. To disinfect sufferers from the lice which convey the disease, the patients or suspected patients are smeared all over, specially their heads, with naphthalene oil. We had over twenty cases in the Location recently and only two were fatal.

Joe gave a show of his cine pictures at the Wesleyan schoolroom in connection with their harvest thanksgiving recently. It lasted about two hours and over two pounds was added to the funds. Our Harvest services are being held this coming Sunday. Last Sunday was observed as Scout Sunday and I took the service. Yesterday evening I had a meeting of the local Scout Association. Last year I was appointed Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. It was quite a satisfactory meeting.

Mom and I called by car, on the new Principal of Rocklands – she was out – so we went on to pay our respects to the new Matron of the Hospital, she was engaged with the secretary so we could not see her, so we went to see Aunt Charlotte at the old ladies home and spent some time with her. She will be 87 on 6th instant. Please correct Aunt Emmie's address from Green Gable to Gate.

Mom's feet are no worse but she cannot do much walking. I see I have no more room this week. Letters have come from Grace and Dot today (Wednesday). They are all well at both homes. Baby Anthony is getting better of his boils. Grace's domestic evidently knows the value of money as she finds that the children's savings is missing. Grace has been able to bottle and make jam from her own grown fruit. Dot says they had a good rain on Sunday last.

A Jewish firm locally are wanting to buy the pianola. I have given them the refusal of it for £65. Grace is having her eyes tested so hope she will be fixed up properly. We are enjoying our grapes now and am taking some to the troops almost daily. Shall send some to the arvest Festival service on Sunday.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 10th, 1943

My dear All,

You will be glad to hear that Mrs Derecourt seems a little better. On Saturday afternoon, Mom and I went up by taxi to see Aunt Charlotte on her 88th birthday and had tea with her. She was quite bright and had been remembered by a number of her friends. Afterwards, we went to see Mrs Derecourt in the hospital, she is still very ill but certainly was a little better. We hope the improvement will continue. Her house is closed up for the present.

Mr Dodd called to see us a few days ago. He and Mrs Dodd are going to Cape Town for two or three months as her sister, Mrs Stegman, has to lay up for sometime and has no one else to look after her. Nessie has her son home from school now and he is a great help to her in her farming operations. Kay's husband is back from up north and as the troops paraded at Durban, he spotted May on the pavement and at once fell out of the lines and embraced the opportunity much to the amusement of everyone.

Do any of you want any of Bladens apples this season? They are not executing any country orders as they cannot undertake the packing and have no boxes. They say they can sell all they produce here in town but if we order any and care to send them away, we can of course do so. The only way we could do this would be to purchase bushel baskets as we did last year (they cost us 2/6 last year but don't know what they will cost this year). Let us know as they will start picking in a fortnight's time. I expect we can get hessian and string for sewing up the baskets so let us know if you want us to get some for you. About 100 go in a basket. They have cooking apples on hand, price 2/6 for 30 or 50 according to size. We are still sending baskets of grapes to the station almost daily for the soldiers. Figs are finished. We sent a lot yesterday to the Harvest Festival service and sale of produce. The produce sold at the social realised over £6. One person gave a donation anonymously of £20, another £5 and another £2 so together with the Sunday's collection, the total must be about £50.

Evelyn and Lynne write that Arthur is on 3 weeks leave – expires on 19th. They will miss him very much when he leaves. He has signed on for service outside South Africa. Rex has been on ten days leave in Alexandra and enjoyed the holiday. No word of his getting home leave. Mrs Armstrong is expecting her husband home soon, he has been in hospital for some time and she is naturally anxious about him. She looks in here almost daily and is as bright and busy as ever.

We are still getting our mid-day meal at the Premier. They have about 30 boarders. On Sundays they have chicken as well as other meats, soup daily, also sweets and coffee. They charge only 1/3. Mrs Derecourt's was 1/6.

On Friday last the Councillors were invited to the official opening of the Wapadsberg Pass by the Graaff Reinet Divisional Council. Five of us went by car. We met the Graaff Reinet Council on top of the mountain – about 6,000 feet above sea level. It was bitterly cold and I did not take an overcoat or motor coat. The wind was nasty so some of us stayed in their cars until the ceremony commenced. It was a cloudy day but did not actually rain – snow would have been more appropriate. As soon as the ribbon had been cut across the road, an adjournment was made to the foot of the mountain where a shelter had been erected and the speeches were made there and refreshments served. Everything passed off quite nicely and I got back about two p.m. I could not help thinking of Douglas taking his many trips over the mountain in his courting days. The Council has made a very good job of the new road and the Cradock Council is now busy making their portion of the pass, this side of the mountain, in like good order. This is the third time a road has been made over the mountain, the first by the Voortrekkers, over 100 years ago. Mom has vivid recollections of going over the mountain with her Father by cart and horses many years ago. Then it was a serious matter owing to the awful gradients. Now it is much better. It can be done for the greater part of the way on top gear by motor.

Joyce has had a letter from Dudley this week, the first letter for over six months. He says he has had only one from her in that period and she had written an air mail letter to him each week. He does not mention himself at all but we all hope he is well. Joyce has sent him a ten pound parcel of a wonderful assortment of things. The Red Cross forward these parcels one very three months.

I find I have made a mistake in saying Dudley had written a letter, it is a card and is dated in January. He says he has written four before this one but she has not received them.

Aunt Eliza has heard from Mrs Douglas Faulds that Lizzie Wilkie – daughter of my Uncle James' late partner – has lost her husband, Mr Colbank, a chemist at Springs. He died suddenly last week. She used to live in Somerset East.

On Saturday night after my bath I unfortunately kicked up against the stool and damaged the third toe on my right foot. It was mighty painful and swelled and turned black and blue. I could hardly walk on Sunday but it is much better now.

More than a fortnight ago, Kahn Bros called to see if I would sell the piano. I told him I was not anxious but if I got a good price, would let it go. I gave them a week's option at £65 and they asked for a renewal of the offer for another week. Then they brought a local pianoforte tuner to examine it and I heard nothing further from them until just before the option expired when he phoned saying he would take it. I should say that he asked for a reduction of £5 which I refused. He has given me his cheque for the full amount dated Thursday and will come and fetch it on Thursday. I have included the records but not the piano stool or the two cupboards in which I keep the rolls. We very seldom use the piano and I have been advised not to use it as it makes me perspire profusely and may be a strain on my heart. Mom does not often play. Perhaps we will get a smaller instrument later on. I notice advertisements in different papers for second-hand instruments.

I hear that Ernest has sold the bottom part of his garden to the proprietor of the Cradock Fisheries. The man will not be able to build until after the war.

Tuesday evening. Aunt Jessie and Enid and two children of Mrs Mallier, Enid's sister, came in this afternoon to do some shopping. They stayed to supper. Mr Seller – late organist of the church, was also spending the afternoon with us and also stayed to supper. Enid says her mother can see without glasses but of course will have to go again to Port Elizabeth to be tested. This will mean more expense and another week in the hotel. She went to see Joe and Blodwen but had forgotten the street and Mr Weavers was out so had to give it up.

Letter from Grace and Joe today. Grace is without any servant at present. The maid she had has been stealing clothing and the children's pocket money and had to be discharged without notice. They have another family in view. Mom sent her a parcel recently and has more shopping to do for her.

Joe wants a bulb for his wireless which he cannot get in Uitenhage, shall try to fix him up tomorrow.

Olive writes that she expects to return some time this week. The car had a puncture going out and the tube got spoilt.

Wednesday morning. Have just returned from the station having taken over a basket of grapes. There is another troop train passing through about noon. A letter from Ruth says that Denis will be passing here on Saturday evening on a fortnight's leave. He is not going north yet. We shall, of course, go over to see him. A second letter from Grace says they have got a whole family of servants so hope for the best. There is some shopping to do for them. I am glad to be of service to any of you. Nothing from Dot so far. Grace says none of them will be coming to us for Easter. Mom's feet are certainly getting better I am glad to say. We are both keeping well. We need rain badly. Ernest got £600 for the bottom piece of his garden. Wonderful price I consider.

Lots of love to all and trust you all keep well,

Dad

Alison's birthday on Friday.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 17th, 1943

My dear All,

I do not know how it is with you but at my rising time, 6.30, it is dark. Next week I suppose it will be a little better as all clocks are to be put back an hour on Sunday so 6.30 today will be 7.30 next week.

A postcard from Dot received on Monday morning said that Alan was in hospital and had his tonsils out, was getting on well and was expected home on Sunday. Reg had been troubled with toothache and came home minus six. The remaining ones are to come out at the rate of six per week. Dot had, amongst other duties, to be organiser and leader of the meeting of women on the United Day of Prayer. There was a united gathering here in the D.R.C. Hall at which Mom attended.

Have any of you ever come across a poem entitled "A bunch of Golden Keys"? It runs like this but it is not complete, perhaps some may have seen it in a children's poetry or lesson book. If so, please give me a copy:

A bunch of golden keys is mine;
To make each day with gladness shine,
"Good morning" that's the little key
That opens every day to me.
When at the table "if you please"
I take from of my bunch of keys.
If friends give anything to me
I use my little "thank you" key.
When night time comes, "good night" I say
And close the door of each glad day.

The East London Dispatch published this and asked their readers if they could complete the lines.

On Thursday last, the wife of the Baptist minister, Mrs McLachian, formerly of Uitenhage, passed away at the hospital. They have only been here about nine months. A very sad case. I was not at the funeral as it was Hospital Board meeting but have written to the minister. Rev Briggs conducted the funeral. There is one little girl of the marriage. Mrs Derecourt is still very ill. It is thought that she is suffering from Brights Disease.

On Saturday evening I went to see Denis pass through to Grahamstown. He seems very well and of course was looking forward to his visit. He returns again on 22nd and hope to see him then. Mom did not go over as the train is only due just about 10 p.m.

Monday and Tuesday this week have been occupied with Council Committees which are very tiring. I do not think I shall continue on the Council much longer. Our Mayor tells me he is likely to be nominated for Parliament if there is a General Election this year, which seems most likely. In that case, he says he will not take the Mayorship again as he thinks it wise to have changes every few years. The municipal year expires in August but owing to war conditions, there has not been any election (municipal) but if any Councillor resigns, then a fresh election takes place to fill such vacancy. I may resign before then perhaps.

After several days of threatening weather, we had a nice rain last night (Monday) resulting in 62 points being registered this morning. As I write now, another shower is falling. We have had so many "dry" thunderstorms which adversely affect my wireless set. Dot says they have had about six inches of rain and Douglas has had good rains too. Arthur's leave will soon be up. I understand the leave he has now is not embarkation leave. Mrs Armstrong has one of her boys here on embarkation leave. Her husband is still on the sick list up north but is listed to come home. She is wonderfully bright and cheerful.

Mom woke during the night very wheezy and sneezing a good deal. I dosed her with pine tar and honey which seems to have done the trick. Her feet are rather better but walking is not her strong point.

Uncle Walter and Olive returned from Conway last week. She has been down to see us but we have not been to see Uncle.

The pianola was removed and paid for last Thursday. I am sure the younger members of the clan will miss it when they come to see us. By the way, we have not heard if anyone is coming to spend Easter with us this year. Grace says they will not be travelling at all. Now that Government has put up 15% on the fares, it makes it increasingly difficult for all concerned. At the same time, we hope someone will come. We have not had any visitors during the week. Dick and his cousin, Miss Wilson, had supper one evening as they were in for the bio. Uncle Norman is still without letters from their boy in Italy.

There are a number of anniversaries to be remembered still this month. On 21st, Denis has a birthday. Aunt Katie's Dudley the following day, Trixie's birthday was on 17th, Dorothy Murray on 27th and David on 31st, the same date Joe and Blodwen and Reg and Dot celebrate their wedding day. There are quite a number in April as well.

Wednesday morning. Letters to hand today from Rex from Cairo, Grace and Aunt Emmie. Rex has been on leave to Alexandra and has visited the pyramids and many places of interest. I will send his letter round when I have answered it. Am glad to hear that he did receive a box of crystallised fruits we went him for Xmas. He says he had previously written acknowledging it but evidently the letter must have been in one of the boats which was sunk on its way to South Africa.

Grace has a family of servants on the plot but they have to build their own house. One of the children is a cripple. They "all seem well". She has to return the piano they have on loan at the end of the year. She would like to have the piano stool which we have. Last evening Mom and I rearranged the house now the piano has gone. We expect we shall use the room more this winter than we have done in the past.

It is a delightfully cool day after having had 80 points of rain since Monday night. The river came down yesterday. We had the garden flooded again a few nights ago. The water was running into the street when I got up. Someone evidently tampers with the sluice in the street above us.

I was able to get a valve and bulb for the wireless for Joe recently. They have not been getting news over the air for some time. If any of you are wanting electrical supplies, there seems to be good stocks here at present.

We are still only having the boy three times a week – unfortunately not on Wednesdays, so I have to do my own posting at the top post office. You will not forget that from April 1st, the rate of postage is increased to 2 pence and postcards one penny each. I hope it will not interfere with anyone's writing. We seem to live for letters.

Lots of love,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 24th, 1943

My dear All,

I am late in starting my circle letter so must hurry up. It is Council meeting tonight and this morning we have been out to morning tea at the Stock's. It was Mrs Stock's birthday yesterday, his today. We were the only invited guests but it occupied most of the morning until dinner time, 12.30. We have much in common. He is 11 years younger than me.

I have apologised to Douglas for not sending round a letter he wrote just after their Silver Wedding, which he asked me to do and I forgot so the best thing to do now is to quote the bulk of what he wrote then here and now. This is what he said:

"Thank you for all your good wishes for our 25th anniversary. A lot has happened in our lifetime and I suppose we should feel grateful that we should be privileged to take part in two major wars (this of course in addition to our domestic skirmishes). It all seems so unreasonable when one hears appeals for recruits of sons of men who were told the same things 25 years ago. I still maintain that unless the world adopts a Christian outlook, these wars will go on indefinitely. Anyway we must go on and do what we can to leave the world a better place than what we found it. If we all try and do this, we will help a good cause. We did not "celebrate" at all as we did not feel justified. Lynne says we at least have her to be grateful for. She seems in good spirits and is helping Mrs Collen look after old "T.B." who is rather ill and Mrs is not too good herself. On Monday night, 1.30, we are to meet Arthur at Pudimoe. He comes on a month's leave to help with farming and by jove, he will be helpful. (*As a matter of fact his leave was cancelled but he came later, Dad*) We are reaping cowpeas at Therons Rust and have maids and men skoffinling and trying to save our crops which look the worse for drought. Anyway, some grain is nearly ripe already. The dry hot winds blow the life out of things ... I find it so difficult to deal civilly with Government employed Nazis. I don't think any civil servant in any department should have a vote. Their job should be to serve their masters (the State) ... June Short has gone to Beit House to school. She is such a little mite to be away and guess she will be very spoilt. We miss her terribly. She was always so bright and this place has just been like home to her. We went to Kimberley by train during the week. It took us three days instead of one (by car). Thanks Dad for the silver spoon dated 1887. Would be interested if you could rake up the history. Am surprised you did not date it in your diary ... Well, thanks again to you one and all. We must try to turn the "silver into gold". We are grateful for all the blessings and try to tolerate all the hardships pleasantly."

In a recent letter, Douglas says he has not had any comments from any of you. That is my fault. Now you have his letter before you so you can reply. Letters from Evelyn and Lynne received today 3rd, report going into town to see Arthur off. They have had a number of visitors at the farm during his stay. Rain has also fallen and some of the crops have been reaped.

Dot writes that the adopted baby is rather better of his boils. He calls her Auntie Hudson but insists in calling Reg, Uncle Reg. She says it will be hard to give him up when the time comes. Reg is having all his teeth out, six at a sitting. Alan has been in hospital and had his tonsils out. They have had nice rains. Grace reports servant troubles have eased off a bit, they now have a family of servants.

I have a number of road maps of the Union if any of you want any, please let me know, otherwise I will send them to the anti waste depot.

Gwen Hudson recently had the pleasure of receiving a phone call from her three brothers who are down from the north. They were in Johannesburg. Needless to say, she was thrilled to hear each one of them speak to her.

We hear that Molly (Meyers) is not too well and Mike is home from service but is not discharged from service. She hopes when her husband is better, to get down to Rooispruit for a change. There has been a scare of smallpox in the district at Vryburg. Mr Tilly is also down on leave. His wife, Joyce, is also looking to go to Rooispruit. He is selling his stock and letting the farm.

Mom has at last got her new dress and it looks very nice. She says she is getting thin. I can say I have noticed all falling off of weight. I am glad to say her feet are less troublesome but are not right yet.

Aunt Eliza and Joyce and Raymond are keeping well. Ray still gets troubled a little with boils. He is taking part in the school sports on Wednesday. Aunt Eliza is still as fond as ever of her cooking. We are favoured with a sample of her handiwork from time to time and can pronounce same first class. We are still getting our mid-day meal at the Premier. I enquired what would be the charge for three meals a day and was informed 3/6, which I think is reasonable. We are not making any change as Mom prefers having breakfast and supper at home.

Did any of you listen in to Mr Churchill on Sunday night? I did and he was most interesting. Our generation is not likely to see the four year plan he sketched out put into operation but it does seem as though he is on the right lines.

Hilda, Jim Butler's wife, at Louisvale, has written such an interesting letter to Aunt Eliza that I have copied some of the details from it. It will show you what farming is like up there. She says she is carrying the full weight of responsibility for the farming. Jim is on active service. She has their own place and two on shares for Dan Biggs. The sultana crop involved her in eight weeks hard work from before sunrise till dark on the lands, exposed to the heat and dust bagging sultanas before the rains caught them. Labour is scarce and she did all the bagging as well as the dipping. The lye they use evidently burns the skin as she says her nails were broken off to the flesh and her hands badly burned and legs and arms blistered. The bleaching process was no small undertaking. She netted a crop of 46 (forty-six) tons (2,000 lbs to the ton). *Some work.* Now the lands have to be ploughed and sown before the picking and packing of the grapefruit harvest before about August. Now there is a drought on and the lambing season is on. Fortunately she has a man to help who is unfit for military service. There are about 1,200 ewes to lamb and the farm is about 18 miles away. She has bought a 600 gallon tank and soldered up the holes and has water ridden out for the animals. She had 50 lambs at the house and says she wishes all her toes and fingers were teats. She has had a good peach crop and has dried 1½ tons. Her feet are so tired at night but she has **MENDING AND KNITTING FOR SOLDIERS TO DO.** Jim has offered to come home on leave but she tells him it is his job to end the war first and she will do her bit on the home front. Next week she is tackling her flower and vegetable gardens, which are considered the best in the north-west district. She says she has found that farming is a way of living but not a way of making money. Really she has done wonders and we may all hope that she does not ruin her health. The children are at school and are doing well. I am sure we all admire her courage and determination. I take off my hat to her. I am sure she never thought her remarks would be published like this and it may be I shall be reprimanded for doing so but hope to be forgiven.

It is now early Wednesday morning. There are school sports on this afternoon – some 700 children taking part. We shall try to go and see them.

Jimmy Armstrong left for the front yesterday morning. There is still no news of Mr Armstrong coming back but he may turn up any time his wife thinks.

At last night's Council meeting, I was put onto a committee for the establishment of a technical college here.

If any of you have copies of the last few Dear Alls, I shall be glad if you will return them as the copy I keep I find is very indistinct. I am getting a new typewriter ribbon which will avoid this. I hope the copies I send you are better than they used to be. I am using new carbon paper.

I am sending Lynne an advertisement for a shorthand typist and book-keeper at the Mission Station that Rev Briggs has just left. The salary is £150 and all found. He says it is a very nice place. The only snag is that she might feel isolated. There are a dozen Europeans on the staff.

We are still sending or taking baskets of grapes to the troops. Our cosmos are a blaze of colour round my instrument case. No post in yet.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday March 31st, 1943

My dear All,

This will be last time we shall be able to post for 1½d and I wonder how long it will be before the Government reverts to the old rate. In 1887, the postage was 6d for half an ounce. Some difference.

We had some trouble with our electric stove during the week. I let some water on to the hot plate and it fused the wire. I tried to fix it up but did not manage it so the man had to come down the next day. He has been tinkering with it more or less since. I found that the stove was getting hot even when the switch was off. We fell back on our paraffin stove and found it in good working order. However it did not inconvenience us much as we go out to dinner.

You may be interested in hearing that Uncle Gervase's daughter, Roslin, was married on 17th to Hilda Collett's son, Derrick, at Cape Town. He is in the army at Potchefstroom and she has been working for the Cape Town Child Welfare Society for some years. Uncle Gervase and Aunt Rouena were in on Saturday. He to play bowls and Rouena and Hope and Thera spent the afternoon with us. I forgot to mention Thera's daughter. They all stayed to supper. Thera looks to come to town about the end of this month. Perhaps Aunt Kate Owen will come to us for a time. They have no definite word of Mollie or Joyce coming to Redlands yet.

Arthur has left for Johannesburg after his three weeks leave. They have no word as to when he will be leaving for the north. It is Cicely's birthday on Friday and she will be spending it at home as it is holiday time. Poor old Mr T.B. Collen is still far from well. He seems to be wondering in his mind and wants to know if they have inspanned yet.

You will be sorry to hear that Mrs Derecourt is no better but she had been brought home as she fears the expense of staying in hospital will be too heavy. No one is allowed to see her.

Easter is very late this year. I have just cut out of the Stellander a paragraph that it will not be so late again until the year 2038. The Fish River Fete will be on June 3rd unless they decide to have it earlier. If we continue to have our dinners out, it will be little use our going except of course for the pleasure of seeing the friends there.

Olive has taken her father to Graaff Reinet to Cyril's farm whilst she goes to Port Elizabeth for an operation. I do not know exactly when she will go but we shall see her on her return from the farm. I expect Mary is on her way to Brooklyn. She comes to us afterwards. Olive will be sorry to miss seeing her.

I told you some time ago that a Mr Biggs – a cousin of the Graaff Reinet Biggs – wanted to buy our house. He is now in East London after prospecting in Queenstown. Well he claims to have a cure for diabetes. Perhaps some of you may know someone suffering from that complaint. I asked him for the cure which he says cured his brother who is over 80. Here it is:

Cure for Diabetes

“Take a piece of spineless cactus about the size of a man's hand, brush and wash it thoroughly, cut it up fine into an earthenware jar, pour two pints (one Colonial quart) of boiling water on to it, when cool, add one ounce of bicarbonate of soda to it and when dissolved, strain and bottle it.

Dose: Start with a wineglass full (four tablespoons) three times a day before meals, reduce to two and later to one a day as it is found to be effective in all cases of diabetes. A strict diet is essential and a diet list should be obtained from a doctor or dietician. Sugar must be eliminated and all sweets and starchy foods avoided.

This remedy has been known to effect a complete cure in some severe cases. If the bicarbonate of soda disagrees, try less of it.”

I hope the above may be of some help to someone.

On Monday morning I went to the station to see Denis pass through but could not find him. It was an unusually long train, 17 saloons and two engines, the longest train that had passed through the station for a long time, an official told me. I gave the fruit I took over for him to Mrs Armstrong's daughter and Mrs James who left on the same train for a short holiday at Conway.

Tuesday afternoon. You will be sorry to hear that Mrs Derecourt was removed from the hospital, at her own request, yesterday afternoon and passed away at 7.30 this morning. The funeral, I

understand, will take place tomorrow afternoon. By this morning's post, we only received one communication and that brought the news from England of the passing away on 14th September last of Mrs Frances Eliza Holmes, mother of Bernard Holmes who stayed with us in Vryburg years ago. He was a veterinary surgeon and afterwards was sent to the Bechuanaland Protectorate. He returned to England some years ago and married. I held his will for many years. I must write to him.

We experienced the coldest morning today and it feels as though we may expect Frost very soon. In Vryburg we used to reckon on getting our first frost on April 15th. We are still enjoying our grapes but they will soon be finished. We have a few shaddocks on the tree, near the summerhouse.

The school sport last Wednesday, in spite of a sharp shower registering 28 points, went off very well. Mom did not go but I went a bit later in the afternoon. It turned bitterly cold so did not stay long. Joyce and Raymond were there. Ray, I think, won a prize.

Grace has got her bifocal glasses and finds them a great help but has to get used to them. Last week she was afraid that baby Charles was developing whooping cough. Perhaps we shall hear tomorrow how he is.

I am glad to be able to report that Mom's feet are easier but she is not keen on long walks. Her back was troubling her so she applied what she thought was a rubbing mixture and was surprised that it was so sticky. She then discovered that she had used the wrong bottle. Instead of Stella oil she had taken a bottle of Pine tar and honey. Her back is much better now. This reminds me of what an experience trained nurse has told us as happening to her. A lady patient had hurt her shoulder and the doctor had prescribed a liniment which the nurse applied. Afterwards nurse discovered that she had taken the wrong bottle and instead of liniment, she had used furniture polish. The patient begged the doctor to give her the prescription as she had derived such benefit from its application but the doctor and the nurse evaded the request and the dear patient never knew what was applied. Perhaps it was a case of faith healing.

Last week Dot reported an experience they had had at the farm where they camp out some times. They found a rinkals snake which made for a hole. They managed to tie the snake's tail to a bush whilst they dug the rest of its body out of the ground. They first were able to break its back and it still showed fight. They dispatched it. It measured about seven feet and is very poisonous. Dot also says none of them will be able to come to us for Easter but she is still hoping they may do so in the June holidays. We hope so too. So far we have not heard of anyone coming for Easter.

Aunt Eliza and Joyce are keeping very well. No further news from Dudley. Mrs Armstrong heard from her husband and both her sons yesterday. Her husband is out of hospital waiting to come home on leave. One boy writes from Army Post Office Durban so is evidently on his way north. The other is still on service in the Union.

Aunt Emmie appears to be going quite blind. She is consulting a specialist as to the wisdom of having an "op" on the worst eye.

I have had such a nice letter from Rev Hornabrook acknowledging my congratulations on his 93rd birthday. He enclosed a copy of a verse he received from Rev R. Barr, who lived just opposite him. . I am afraid there is not sufficient room to get it in this week but will try:

Alert for all the latest news,
By radio, books and press reviews,
Believing despite all we see
The best by far is yet to be.
No weeping for the good old days,
But for the present giving praise.
A soul all passionate for truth

A heart aflame with love for youth,
A Christ-like, generous, living mind,
With kindly eye for all mankind
Rich in your faith, rich in your friends
Rich in the light that memory lends,
May blessings round your footsteps pour
From ninety three to ninety four

Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday April 7th, 1943

My dear All,

[It is Tuesday afternoon and Mom and I are going to see a collection of pictures by a Miss Robertson in the Emergency League Hall. The price of admission is in aid of war funds. We are not likely to purchase any of the paintings, which I understand are priced at so many guineas. Tomorrow is the Agricultural Show which I think should not have been held in war time. I believe that Cradock is the only town in the Cape Province that is holding a show this year. I do not think any of the Fish River farmers are exhibiting any stock. Dick, I know, is coming in and will sleep here tonight. He is one of the stewards. If time permits, there are several matters I wish to refer to.

You will be sorry to hear that Denis' future mother-in-law passed away at the Provincial Hospital, Port Elizabeth a fortnight ago. Fortunately Denis was in Grahamstown at the time and was able to go to Port Elizabeth with Dorothea and no doubt was a great comfort to all concerned. The funeral took place at Fort Hare. I have written both to Dorothea and her father conveying the sympathy of all the family. Dorothea is back at Rhodes University. Denis was called back to Roberts Heights suddenly so did not go through here as originally intended. I expect he will be back at Potchefstroom camp shortly. He does not know if he will get further leave before leaving the Union.

There is an interesting article of Ruth's in the Outspan of March 26th and on the same page is one by Rev Wilkinson on fifth wheel religion I should like all of you to read. It is quite good.

Olive left for Port Elizabeth on Sunday evening, her sister, Hilda, and her husband and son are staying with Uncle Walter whilst Olive is away. She does not know if she is to undergo an op or not. Hilda's boy is not normal. He is huge in size but cannot talk normally and is quite backward. He is about 12 or so. They have a daughter at the D.S.C. in Grahamstown and yesterday had word that mumps had broken out at school and she must go home. So Hilda phoned from here to send her here. Fortunately the school holidays will be on in a week or so, so she will not miss much schooling.

I must tell you an experience Aunt Eliza had recently. Without her knowledge, Dr was asked to call and see to her ears. When he arrived, Auntie said she did not want him but at last submitted to having the ear syringed. She said it was worse when he had finished. However, later in the morning, she went to town – in her chair of course – and when she got near to Mr Thomas' shop, a sort of bubble burst in her ear and a stream of water flowed down her cheek. Since then she is able to hear much better.

We are glad to hear that baby Charles has not got whooping cough. David writes that he has given up the idea of being a teacher for financial reasons. He looks to leave school after passing matric. He asks for advice.

Mary has Miss Wookey supplying for her so has been able to get away. She was set to arrive at Graaff Reinet last Friday evening. She would have about eight hours wait at Rosmead Station for a connection. What a holiday. She says the doctor is sending us a box of avocado pears shortly to be divided amongst the clan here. We are to send the box back full of apples. I hope to be sending a basket of apples to each home about the end of this week or early next. I have arranged with Cull and Kew to pack them in baskets and send them to the station for me. Hope they will arrive safely and not be "pinched" in transit.

Later. We have been to see the water colour paintings. They are very nice, many of them, but should grudge paying the prices asked for them. Whilst there, we had a free view of the horses brought in for the show tomorrow as they paraded the streets. A slight shower of rain fell during the afternoon.

The Helpmekaar function went off alright last Wednesday afternoon.

Mom is having the W.C.T.U meeting here on Thursday afternoon. As it is Show Day, I don't suppose there will be many present.

Most of you have referred to Hilda Jim's work at Louisvale. Dot writes that the Vet. Surgeon at Potgietersrus was transferred there from Upington and too greetings from the Louisvale

relation to them. He said that he considered Jim was the best farmer he had ever met, everything was done in such a business way.

Dot tells of an experience she and some neighbours and children had when they went to call on a Missionary's wife from the Congo. They noticed bees were wild. The party was out so they made a hasty retreat another way. Subsequently they found that two hives had gone mad, two dogs which were left tied up had been badly stung, one was dead. Fortunately no one was attacked.

You will be interested in hearing that Kingsley Jennings at Bulawayo has been called up for part time military service.

Lynne writes that they are needing rain badly again. Their fruit crop is finished and she is surprised that we still have grapes to send to the troops. Douglas is expecting 800 to 900 bags of mealies this season. They are already harvested. Of course they all miss Arthur and hope he may get further leave before he leaves the Union. She says my dear alls go to Rex every week. He writes very brightly. There is no word of his getting home leave.

Lynne says she is not applying for any situation at present. I sent her an advertisement of a good post at the mission station where Rev Briggs was stationed. Salary is £150 and all found. Mom has sent her some of her old songs and Cecily some music. Both are appreciated. Lynne also tells of Arthur Collett whom we all knew in Scholtzfontein days. He is working on a farm as Manager in Natal I think. He has been up to help his father who is still ill.

I recently met Mrs Vermuilen, the lady who was after our house a year or so ago. She is living in the top part of the town. She says her sister is wife of the Principal of the Potgietersrus public school. Perhaps Dot or Reg has met her.

Wednesday. I have just been to the opening of the new Preparatory School next to Rocklands. It is a fine building. The Supt. General of Education officiated. He states that five sixths of the pupils are Afrikaans speaking.

The local Agricultural Society have had a nasty shock lately. They found when they came to make arrangements for their refreshment booth that all their stock of cups and saucers had been stolen. No trace so far of the culprits.

Blodwen has written saying she has been suffering with her feet for some time and has been generally out of sorts. Dr Ruth has her in hand and we hope to hear of an improvement. They had a few friends in to celebrate their wedding anniversary. There is a possibility of a new school being built in the street at the back of their house. Blodwen sang a solo in the Methodist Church on a recent Sunday evening. They like Rev Weavers and say the church is being better attended since he went there. Joe is still acting as charge-man and is looking better in health. A pal of his writes from Krugersdorp – 29 miles from Johannesburg – saying he can get 4/- an hour there. I think they are contemplating making a change. Joe says he wishes he knew of this when he left Bloemfontein. I guess the cost of living would be much higher there than in Uitenhage. The children are both doing well at school and at music. Trevor has been in trouble with veldt sores lately. I have suggested that if Joe is seriously thinking of making a change, he should take a few days off and go and have a look at the place.

The Premier is full up with Show visitors. They have 76 to dinner tonight. We go to lunch at 12.30 so as to get home in time for the news at 1.15.

Interesting letters from Grace and Dot this morning. Grace says they discovered a nest of rats in their motor and dispatched eleven in one night. They bought a live sheep from a fare and dispatched it at home. I must tell you the tale about the tail of a pup Dot has recently acquired. She took it to a vet to have it removed, she assisted in holding the animal whilst the op was being performed. Reg asked baby if Auntie Hudson has bitten off the tail. Baby said "yes" much to Dot's amusement.

We had ten points of rain last night for which we are thankful. It is much cooler today. It has been 95 in the shade recently.

Much love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday April 14th, 1943

My dear All,

Tuesday morning. A letter from Douglas received yesterday announces that Lynne has been appointed Secretary to the Queenswood boarding establishment at Queenstown and leaves for there on Saturday 17th. We are somewhat surprised as in her last letter, she said she wanted to stay at home until they knew if Arthur was going to get any extra leave before going north. I had sent her an advertisement of a good post as Secretary at Shawbury at £150 per annum and all found but perhaps this post is better. For one thing she will be with her friends, the Collins, formerly of Vryburg, and another thing, which we are pleased about, is that she will be so much nearer to us and can, we hope, run across to us for holidays. We hope she will like it. Queenswood is a Methodist School and has a first class reputation. I think it ranks with Kingswood at Grahamstown. Douglas is still busy reaping mealies but expects frost any day. The rainfall since August has been 14.31 inches, which is very good. Rex has also taken the new oath but they hope he will get home leave before going further away. He is doing more advanced engineering work and is earning 10/- a day now. He is wise in saving a good deal of this for future reference. Mr Cullen is a little stronger now but Douglas thinks he will sell up his farm. They will all miss him very much. Kingsley is growing a big fellow and clever – like the rest of the clan. Joyce Tilley has gone to Rooispruit for a holiday. It was Uncle Owen's birthday on Monday. He is getting on in years. Douglas' comment on Hilda Jim's letter is "the womenfolk are wonderful and no doubt about it". I sent Hilda a copy of my dear all and she has written thanking me for it. Of course she never thought it would come into my hands and be written up. She says she will come and see us some day. She pays tribute to what Jim has done. He is a Captain now. Our grapes are at last finished. Winter is approaching rapidly but we have not had frost yet. The leaves are falling rapidly, the Virginia creeper over the tanks is shedding its leaves and they do look very beautiful.

I have sent apples to some of the clan and am waiting for containers before sending to the others. I hope they arrive safely and will give as much pleasure as former lots have done. The doctor of Mary's hospital is sending some avocado pears and we are to return the box filled with apples but the box has not come to hand yet.

Mary will be arriving here next Monday morning via Port Elizabeth. She has spent one week with her Mother at Brooklyn and is now spending a week at Florences' at Vrede. She is going by train to Port Elizabeth for Sunday and comes on here the same night. She leaves for Sibasa on Monday 26th. Dot wants her to break her journey with them but I doubt if she will have time as she is due at her duties on Wednesday. She will see Olive who has had an operation in St Joseph's Home and am glad to hear that the op has been a success. Hilda Daniels and family are staying with Uncle Walter. They have been here a few times.

At the beginning of the month I asked the new proprietor of the Premier if he was going to continue supplying our mid-day meal at the same rate as the former owner, he said no, the price would be 2/- each. I said I did not mind paying the same as we did at Mrs Derecourt's (1/6). I enquired from the Masonic Hotel what they would charge and they quoted £5 per month for the two of us. That works out at about 1/8 per meal. The Premier eventually came down to 1/6 so we are staying on at that. I have no liking for hotels and the serving as well as the meals has greatly improved under the new management. Mrs Rainier is still there and sits at our table.

Grace reported good rains when she last wrote. Hope to hear again tomorrow.

We have not heard from Joe if he has decided anything about a move. So long as he is acting as charge-man, he says, he has nothing to complain of. Blodwen writes that she has been far from well and has been in the lady doctor's hands. She is better off for servants now as one sleeps in which is a great help.

Mrs Booth, who lives next door to Miss Metcalf, has a grand-daughter saying with her. She is only about four years old and such a sweet little thing. She is so pleased to go with me to the station when I take grapes over. Her father is at the front and there has been some domestic trouble with the mother. She loves to carry her small basket as well. Sometimes she comes along to have a swing. She plays very nicely with Miss Metcalf's niece as well.

Monday night Mom and I went to the bio to see the film "One foot in Heaven". Rev Briggs recommended the picture which he saw in Johannesburg. They also went and kindly motored us home. The picture is well worth seeing if you have the opportunity. It was very amusing in parts. Ernest and Joyce were there as well.

Dorothy Murray is going to Pretoria on Friday for a week or ten days. Mr and Mrs Murray are coming from East London to help Nurse Lanham, who lives at The Poplars, look after the baby. She hopes to see Mary when she passed through Pretoria. The baby has not been very well lately but is thriving.

A letter from Kate Owen to hand this (Tuesday) morning says Joyce and her children motored down alone from Vryburg and look to stay a few months and then may go to the coast for the duration. The son should then go to school. They have let the farm and sold the stock. Her husband is in Pietermaritzburg waiting to move. Maude Meyer was due the next day so the family is altogether at the moment. Aunt Kate may come to town to be with Thera about the end of the month. Uncle Owen may also come for the sale of Highlands and Uncle Norman is selling the portion of Katkop that the Leonards are on. Aunt Emmie was to go to an eye specialist on Monday re having an operation. Shall be anxious to hear the result. She seems to be going quite blind very rapidly. She cannot walk far without resting by the way.

Last week I received the first "airgraph" I have ever seen. It was from Miss Alden in England. She used to work for me at Midland House and we have exchanged Xmas cards for a long time. She is working at Stoke Ferry, Norfolk. She says they have not been bombed or suffered loss so far. She was a great friend of Mrs Derecourt. She will be sorry to hear of her death.

Aunt Eliza has received a parcel returned which she had sent to Dudley a long time ago. It contained a set of draughts which she thought he might be glad to play in spare time. The "board" was a handkerchief with the necessary squares and the "men" were pieces of cardboard. Quite a useful thing for portability. There were other things in his kitbag. Joyce has not heard from him again for a long time. Aunt Emmie had a letter card from him dated 20/2/43 acknowledging her letter 23/9/42. He says he is keeping well and hopes Joyce is receiving his weekly letters (which she is not). They can only get about 50 words on the card which of course has to pass the Censor. Prisoners of War cannot write to their people in Afrikaans as there is no Censor there so they have to ask their people to write to them in English otherwise they do not get any letters either to or from them.

Will anyone who has a copy of my last week's dear all please return it as my copy was a failure. I have a complete file of them from 1933. I suppose some day someone will consign them to the fire.

We did not go to the Agricultural Show last week but from all accounts it was fairly good but the number of exhibits were much less than before the war. A good many people, myself included, think it should not be held for the duration. Hilda Jim says that instead of getting 46 tons of sultanias, she finds by the returns from the firm she sold to that she got 52 tons. Jim has broken his hand and has it in plaster of Paris. She thinks it was damaged in manoeuvres.

Denis writes that he had to return to Roberts Heights but I think he is now back at Potchefstroom. He has a special course of training for map reading. I recently wrote to the South African Broadcasting Corporation asking if they would supply me with a timetable of news items. They have sent me quite a lot of information and Mr Thomas' friend, Mr Cook, is also giving me particulars regarding English times of news and wavelengths. When I have this complete, I hope to tabulate it all and let each of you have a copy.

It is now Tuesday evening, and I think I must ring off for this week. If we hear from any of the others, I will try to add a supplement or keep my comments for the next edition. My desire is to keep the family in touch with each other and ourselves as much as possible. I fear my rambling comments are of little interest but it gives me pleasure in doing them. I know there must be many mistakes for which I offer my apologies and forgiveness. Lots of love to each and all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday April 21st, 1943

My dear All,

Monday evening, Mary is writing a few letters to post tonight and I have just returned from my 6th meeting today but before retiring for the night, may as well begin my epistle so as to be able to get on with it before breakfast in the morning. Mary arrived by the early train according to schedule at 7.15 this morning. She appears very well but has got thinner instead of stouter. I notice a few grey hairs appearing on her Eton cropped head.

Tuesday morning. I did not get far last evening. Mary has now gone to the station to see Winnie Biggs pass through on her way home from Rhodes College. Mary says she will not be able to break her journey at Potgietersrus as she has to be back at her duties on Wednesday morning. She is sorry.

Well, there is another piece of interesting news to tell this week. On Thursday afternoon, just as I was resting on the sofa in the passage, I heard the phone ring that a trunk call was coming through. My first thought was that perhaps Mary had altered her plans but it was not that. It was a young lady's voice which at the first moment I did not recognise. To my surprise it was Lynne speaking from Queenstown. She had arrived the day before, the Committee having wired for her to come at once. So she left Vryburg on Tuesday instead of Saturday as previously arranged. She seemed very happy and thinks she will like the job. I understood her to say that there are about 60 boarders in the hostel – there are a number of them in the town – her job will be to look after their pocket money etc. She does not think there will be much correspondence to do. Of course I suggested that she should come over here for Easter but she said she had to be on duty on Sunday. She will have the regular school holidays so we shall hope to see her during the short holidays when it will be too far for her to go home. Her address is 13 Milner Street, Queenstown. I think this will necessitate my doing an extra copy of my dear all to send to her as Evelyn sends her copy to Rex every week, so Lynne can send her copy to Arthur and so help to keep the clan in touch with each other.

Mary reports that Olive has had quite a serious "op" and it will be some time before she is right again. She was able to sit out in the grounds when she was with her on Sunday afternoon. In the meantime, her sister, Hilda Daniell and family are looking after Uncle Walter. He has not been too well lately. We shall go and see him on Sunday when he will be 88.

Last Sunday morning about nine, our boy William came to tell us that his daughter-in-law had died at Conway and would we phone to her master? So I put him through and he had his first experience of speaking on the phone. Then a little later, a man who works on the National roads and wanted to borrow 15/-. He evidently knew me but I did not know him. There was nothing doing. I subsequently found he was a waster.

After dinner. Yesterday (Monday) was my usual busy day with six meetings of Council committees and in the evening the annual meeting of the United Party. Mr Cull has been selected as the official candidate for the forthcoming Parliamentary Election about October. This will mean a lot of work for him. I hope he may get in but it will entail a lot of travelling etc.

On Thursday, we received a docket from the Post Office saying there was a parcel for us from Potchefstroom. Mrs Rainier – who sits at our table also had a notice of one from Johannesburg so I hurried from dinner to get both of them but found the Post Office closed. However I went again later after I had got the 1.15 news. Instead of being from Potchefstroom it was from Potgietersrus and Mrs Rainier's was medicine from Vryburg instead of Johannesburg. Ours was a box of avocado pears from Dot. They have been greatly enjoyed. Many thanks Dot. The ones from Sebasa have not come to hand yet.

Saturday has been proclaimed a public holiday, being Easter. This will operate each year at Easter, thus giving four clear days holiday at Easter. January 2nd has also been declared a Public Holiday but I understand both of these dates only apply at present to the Cape Province. No doubt the other Provinces will follow the good example of the Cape.

I think I forgot to mention that the gathering of the W.C.T.U. on 8th was a success. I stayed and had tea with the ladies and then withdrew. They had a missionary's wife from Czechoslovakia

who gave the address. I understand it was most interesting. I am hoping she will give a public address in town in aid of war funds.

Harry Daniell was telling us of a cure which was applied to him by a Dr Hudson in Jansenville for asthma, I think. The doctor took 2 c.c. from his arm and immediately transferred the same blood into his hip. This was done on five different days. No medicine was taken and nothing was done to the blood. He says he is cured.

Wednesday morning. I am glad to say that Aunt Emmie has made arrangements to have her eye operated on at Groot Schuur Hospital. The date has not been fixed but expect it will be done about the end of this month. Dr said she would be quite blind very shortly if the op was not performed. So far as I can judge, it is a similar op as mine was. I hope it will be as successful. We shall naturally be anxious to hear how she gets on. It is nice to know that Christine is nursing in the same hospital but probably may not be in that ward.

Joyce has had another letter from Dudley. She had one numbered 6 a little while ago, now she has one numbered five. He seems to have written frequently but they are not coming through in order. He has just heard of Mr Metcalf's death and that not from Joyce's letters but from "one of the Collett boys". His last letter is dated January 11th. He does not seem to be getting Joyce's letters. She has written every week since he was captured so there must be a great accumulation awaiting him somewhere.

A postcard from Dot said that Alan has contracted tick-bite fever but was getting over it. She had not had the doctor to see him yet. Reg is getting on without his teeth. Hope he will soon get fixed up.

Douglas and Evelyn are all alone now. Rex still in Cairo, Arthur in Maritzburg, Lynne in Queenstown and Cicely and Kingsley at school in Kimberley.

Ernest is going to Grahamstown tonight to see Geoffrey "capped" at Rhodes University tomorrow. He has taken the B.Sc. exam.

The Chairman of the local Red Cross Society having resigned at the meeting last night, owing to pressure of business, I have been elected to act in the meantime. A wonderful amount of work has been accomplished during the war and I hope the organisation will be kept going.

You will perhaps notice that I am using paper that is an inch or so shorter than usual. I have run out of the former size but am trying to get more. However the difference will not be very great and I shall try to write as much as possible on the reduced size.

No post has come to hand so far so will close with love to all and hope for good news in due course. As I write, Mary is not too well this a.m. and is resting before going to morning tea with Miss Metcalf.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday April 28th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Tuesday afternoon. 56 years ago today I was saying goodbye to dear old England. Yesterday morning I saw Mary off to the north. Her week has gone very quickly. She was not very well one or two days but recovered. There was of course lots that she would have liked to do but time was few and it soon flew. Aunt Jessie came in one afternoon. I must not forget to tell you that Aunt Kate's daughter, Thera, has another daughter. Aunt Kate came in last evening by train and is staying a few days with us. Thera is getting on nicely, she says. Her sister, Joyce, paid a hurried visit to Maritzburg and Durban to see her husband off "up north". We presume that Arthur, and Hudson and others have gone by the same boat. Lynne has just rung up from Queenstown to enquire how we all are. She says she likes her work but cannot say when she will be able to spend a weekend with us as she has Sunday duties to attend to. We have not had any letters from her yet but expect she is kept pretty busy. She says she is quite happy there.

Last week was a remarkably wet one. We had rain on four consecutive days totalling just two inches. It was a beautiful steady rain, all our tanks are running over and the garden is properly wet. Too wet to work in. It is quite nice to see the sun again. Good Friday we went to church in the morning – 7.30 and on Sunday morning I took the service. Rev Briggs should have gone to Daggaboer but the people there phoned cancelling it as so many were away for holidays etc. I did not know until near the end of the service that he was sitting in the back pew. He is very keen on bowls. There have been a number of visitors here playing friendly matches. I have not taken it up.

Mrs MacLeod often drops in. She came to town for a few days and incidentally celebrated her 45th anniversary of her wedding day. She was staying at the Premier with her husband of course.

Ruth writes that they were going to spend Easter Monday on the farm. Denis was being transferred to Barberton. I expect he will soon be going north if he has not already gone. Ted has been acting Postmaster again for a while. They have had good rains. He expects that both the boys will be earning for themselves by the end of the year. I hope they do well in their exams. Dot's Alan is up and about again after his mysterious illness. Up to last week's letter, they had not determined what was really wrong with him. Dot thinks it was tic-bite fever.

Lynne said just now that Douglas and Evelyn were on their way to Pretoria about Douglas' eyes again. We have not heard from them this week. The Easter holidays of course upset the postal arrangements. I expect all letters will be late this week. Norman has been on a cycle trip with a missionary's son to some farms in the district holding services amongst the natives. He was very interested. At one place a native woman acted as interpreter. Norman came 2nd in his class place with 77.1% and Alan 1st with 86.7%. They both seem to be doing very well at school. Mrs Legg has gone to her mother at Newcastle, Dot says. Her mother is 93 and has 8 great grandchildren. Dot and Co were going camping for the holidays but Anthony was to stay with his mother who was up for the holidays. They all seem to have great fun with the little fellow.

We have not had letters from Uitenhage last week or this so far but hope they had a nice rest and change over the long weekend. No further reference to the Krugersdorp change so perhaps it is off.

Aunt Emmie has decided to have her eye op early in May. We all hope that it will be a great success. Dr said she would be stone blind soon if it was not done. Aunt Eliza keeps very well, also Joyce. I have not heard if she has had any more recent letters from Dudley. Uncle Dudley had heard from his boys that two of them are working on farms for the Italians.

Don't forget that it is Dot's birthday on May 5th. We went to see Uncle Walter on his 88th birthday last Sunday. The same day was the 9th anniversary of the passing away of Uncle Joe. Later. Have just heard from Aunt Eliza that Aunt Emmie is going into hospital on Saturday so I suppose the op will come off on Sunday or Monday.

Kate Owen will be staying with us for a week or more. Uncle Owen may come in on Saturday to attend the sale of the farm advertised at Fish River.

Wednesday morning. I forgot to mention that on Saturday evening we had friends in to meet Mary, Mr and Mrs Lidbetter, Vedric Loscombe and his wife, Miss Loscombe and Ina McLeod. We were sorry that Joyce and Miss Loscombe, the nurse, could not come. Had they been here, we should have had almost a gathering of nurses.

Ernest has spent the weekend in Grahamstown and attending the Friends Monthly meeting at Mrs Hooles farm near Commadagga. He went to Grahamstown to see Jeffrey “capped” at the University. He is now a B.Sc. and has enlisted.

We have seen a good deal of Hilda Daniell and her husband and two children during the few weeks they have been here looking after Uncle Walter. They are farming about 200 miles from here not far from Klipplaats on the Graaff Reinet – Port Elizabeth line. Harry Daniell is Uncle Walter’s executor and he is trying to sell – by private treaty – some of Uncle’s farms. They have brought to town some of the old furniture from the farm. Some will be sold and some stay in their town house. We do not know when Olive will return from Port Elizabeth. She is expected to leave the nursing home some time this week and will stay some time with Eileen Saunders – now Mrs Juste – at Walmer so as to get up her strength. The op has been bigger than at first expected.

At the Council meeting last evening, I resigned from the Committee of the Technical College. The meetings are conducted all in Afrikaans and I am not satisfied with their constitution. Unfortunately it is a political move on the part of one section and I am better out of it.

If our Mayor should be elected a Member of Parliament, there will most likely be a change in the Mayorship. Possibly a country member of the Council will be elected. I have been sounded as to continuing in office as deputy as it would be very inconvenient for a member residing out of town to carry out the duties. There has not been a Municipal election since the war. A special proclamation was issued authorising the then Councillors to continue in office. I don’t know what will happen this year.

Letter from Joe is the only one this morning. No doubt the others will come tomorrow. They had a somewhat wet weekend in Uitenhage but on Monday went to Van Stadens Pass. From all accounts it is a very beautiful spot. There is no mention of anyone being ill so hope they are all well now. Joe does not mention Krugersdorp so suppose the contemplated removal is “off”. Since dinner, the Magistrate has asked me to attend the closing function of the Women’s’ Emergency League this afternoon. They have organised a big talent fund drive and this is being wound up at a garden party when the amounts raised will be announced. It looks as though it might rain but hope it keeps fine. Mom is going with Aunt Kate to see the baby about three and I will pick her up there. Aunt Kate has dinner with us at the Premier.

I must close now with love to each and all, hoping to hear good news from all of you in due course.

Yours affectionately,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 5th, 1943

My dear All,

It is quite cold this morning but no frost yet. Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate have just left for the station, going home to Redlands. Aunt Kate has been with us just a week and Uncle Owen phoned on Saturday asking if it would be convenient for him to spend the weekend with us. His train was 1½ hours late, only arriving here at ¼ to midnight. We did not wait up for him. It was Friday night, not Saturday he came. Of course they have spent a good deal of time with Thera and the new baby. Am pleased to say both are doing well. They expect to see Uncle Gervase on Thursday. Uncle Owen came on Friday night, not Saturday. They came with us to church both morning and evening and enjoyed Rev Briggs very much. They had met him before when Kate's sister, Ethel, was married to Dr Seller. Mr Briggs brought the doctor from Elliot to Middelburg to be married. We all had morning tea with them at the parsonage on Monday. Owen and Kate had dinner with us at the Premier, except on Sunday when they were invited to the Poplars. Talking of the Premier, they have informed us that it does not pay to service dinners at 1/6 each and have put the price up to 2/- from May 1st. Eggs are 3/- to 3/3 dozen, meat and vegetables have all gone up in price so we have decided to stay on there for the present. They have also raised the teas for all their boarders. Mrs MacLeod has gone to her sister at Tarka for a time. Her sister and brother-in-law, Mr and Mrs Jonnie de Kock of Mafeking, are there also. We hope to see something of them as we have not met them for years. He was M.P. for Mafeking up to the time of Union.

We have often wondered if Mr Milne was still alive. For years past I have sent him a Xmas card and written to him for his birthday. Last week we received a letter from him. It has taken four and half months for it to reach us from Scotland. His writing is very shaky and he says he suffers from rheumatism at times. Part of his letter is written in pencil and the rest in ink. He must be over 80 I think. Some years ago I wrote to his sister enquiring about him and she has also written a nice note. Mr Milne also enclosed a letter to Uncle Walter and Olive. They were very great friends. Since writing their letters, we notice that Aberdeen has been severely bombed but hope he was not affected thereby. He says all their family are dead except one sister and himself. I have replied to his letter at once. He wishes to be remembered to all his old friends, Colletts and Butlers. As you know, he lived with us for about ten years when we were in New Stockenstroom Street and the corner of Market Street. I think we only had Harold, Douglas and Grace in those far off days. By the same mail, we had Xmas cards from Agnes Williams from Wales and one of my first cousins, Jim Watts. He was placed under my care when he came to Croydon school.

I forget if I told you that with the rains we had last month, all our tanks were filled and overflowing. This will set us up for months. We never have been quite out of rainwater since I put up the seven tanks.

The garden party last Wednesday was a great success. The ladies raised by their talent effort over £330. They had a guessing competition as to the sum raised and one lady guessed the correct amount within two pence.

A wealthy man in Johannesburg died recently and left £146,800 to charities. The Methodist Church in the Transvaal benefit to the extent of £66,350. What a pity he did not give this away during his lifetime and thus had the joy of seeing it used.

We have had a few postcards from Mary since she left. She has arrived safely at her destination. Miss Wookey, who supplied for her, had an attack of malaria during her stay. It looks as though Mary intends staying up there as I notice she has applied for her membership to be transferred to the Transvaal. We are expecting a box of avocado pears from there and we are to return the box filled with applies. There is great excitement at the Armstrongs this morning as Mr Armstrong is due by the 9.30 down train. He must have passed one of his sons on the boat going north.

You will be glad to know that Olive is out of the nursing home at Port Elizabeth. She is staying sometime longer at Walmer with Eileen Saunders – now Mrs Jooste – I think she is in the employ of the Municipality there as District Nurse or some such capacity. Uncle Walter has now gone to Cyril's farm in the Graaff Reinet district. Hilda Daniell and family could not stay longer to

look after Uncle. They are farming in the Jansenville district, about 200 miles from here. We saw a good deal of them whilst here.

After dinner. Have been up to Market Street to see if any news has come from Cape Town regarding Aunt Emmie's "op" which was to have been performed in Groot Schuur Hospital on Monday but nothing has come through so must take no news as being satisfactory. She was going into hospital last Saturday. Of course she will not be able to write herself for some time but no doubt Gladys will keep us informed.

Joyce has received a few more letters – if you can call them such – from Dudley. They are only allowed to write on official notepaper and on regular lines, evidently for Censor purposes. However, he seems as fit as can be expected and longs for letter which seem very slow in reaching him, although Joyce has written to him practically every week since he was taken prisoner of war. Some of the Collett boys are working on farms and earning a little money and in addition, they get double rations. They are most thankful for the Red Cross gifts which reach them.

We have also received another letter from Rex near Cairo. He always writes very interestingly, telling of his various trips. He seems to like Alexandria to Cairo. I wonder if Arthur and he will be able to meet up there. I think Arthur must have left the Union by now.

We have had two phone calls from Lynne since she arrived in Queenstown but no letters yet. She told us that her Mom and Dad had gone to Johannesburg so we may hear from them soon I hope.

The weather lately – after the rains – has been delightful. It is difficult to stay indoors as it is so nice in the sun.

Wednesday May 5th, Dot's birthday. We have written but all the same we wish her on behalf of all the Clan many happy returns of the day.

A postcard from Mary says she arrived safely and found that Miss Wookey had had an attack of malaria during her absence. She has got a Secretary to the hospital now.

The baskets in which the apples were sent cost 3/- each. If they are not worth keeping at that price, you can return them and Cull and Kew will take them back. I have paid for them.

Later. Letters from Grace and Dot are to hand. Ted wrote last week as Miss Hick was spending the weekend with Grace. Ted had the job of pulling up the windmill and putting it on new washers. Some job I guess. The children are all back at school. Harold and Jean have come at the top of their classes. David fears he has not come first in his class, he thinks his English paper has let him down. Jean sang a solo at the Sunday School anniversary and was congratulated on her effort.

Dot says their local effort for the Navy realised £320. She can't make out where all the money came from. Arthur, Billy Ricket and George Hudson have gone north. Mrs Hudson is going to Potgietersrus on a visit as Donald is home on three months leave. Reg is going to meet her at Johannesburg. Mrs Legg is still with her mother who is full of years, has nine children (girls) and one son. Crowds of grandchildren so has plenty of noise and fun. Mrs Legg is going to Durban shortly.

Dot says she does not know where her 38 years have gone to. She is always very busy. She is not making any promises about coming down in June or July or December but will do so if possible. Mr Hudson has bought Able's farm near Madrid. Well time is up so must stop with love to all,

From Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as May 12th, 1943

My dear All,

The box of avocado pears that Mary kindly sent duly arrived and have been distributed amongst 13 homes. Unfortunately there were too many in the box and those at the bottom of the box were rather badly bruised. Nevertheless they have been greatly appreciated. The box has been duly returned filled with Bladens apples which I hope will arrive in good order and be as much appreciated as those sent to others in the family. The demand has been so great that the price has gone up.

We had a card from Evelyn saying they expected to be home again last Wednesday. We have not yet heard the result of Douglas' visit re his glasses. Perhaps we will hear before this is posted. Lynne writes that she hopes to spend the forthcoming holidays between us and Grass Ridge. We hope this will materialise. Her duties seem to be attending on duty during the girls' preparation classes and attendance on duty on Sundays etc. She says she has time for writing etc and evidently likes the position and town and people she has met.

Grace tells of their Sunday School anniversary having been a success. Jean took a prominent part in singing solo etc. Miss Hicks has been spending her leave with them and has now returned to duty. A relation of Ted's, Rev Sorry, was at church last week having come from Port Elizabeth to recuperate after a nervous breakdown. He was stationed in Kroonstad at one time. He was also a schoolmaster at Cape Town. His first wife was Mr Irons Senior's sister. He says the change is doing him good. We shall see more of him soon.

You who know Nurse Edith Collett will be sorry to hear that she has been in hospital at East London for some time. She is not able to do any knitting at present and has been suffering a good deal of pain. We hope she will soon be better. Miss May Troppit of Dagga Boer too is in hospital here. She had a fall in her house on Good Friday. She hopes to be able to get up and about the end of this week. She lives alone in the old home of Mr and Mrs John Trollip.

Aunt Eliza has had her bedroom re-colour washed and it looks very nice. It must have been some job taking down and re-hanging all the pictures etc but it was worth it no doubt.

Joyce has heard from Dudley that he is being transferred to another camp. It is to be hoped that with the great victory that has just taken place in North Africa, that it may be possible for all our South African men to be released and sent home. What rejoicings there will be then.

The Sunday School anniversary on Sunday was well attended and the singing excellent. Raymond was awarded a prize and seemed very happy.

Evelyn phoned to Dot from Pretoria on her 38th birthday. The hearing was very clear. We do not know if they have the phone in the house.

Our garden boy only worked one day last week – was sick – and has not put in an appearance so far this week either. There is not much for him to do except pump water into the top tank and tidy up the leaves.

Joe says he will be going back to his old job as a new man from Mafikeng is coming to be charge-man. He says there will be vacancies at East London and Mafikeng. I wonder if he will get either of those positions. Merle has not been very well lately but we hope to hear better news of her soon. Dr Ruth Hull says she may have to go to Port Elizabeth Hospital.

It is now Tuesday morning. The above was typed on Monday evening so I am well up to time. We are having the Armstrongs in to supper this evening. Dora Armstrong is on holiday so as to be with her brother. She is also asked to come to supper. Mr Armstrong has brought some serviette rings he has made whilst in the desert from aeroplane shafts. All worked by hand. They are splendidly done. He made a very nice ashtray from some other part of a plane. He seems very clever with his hands. He had a very interesting trip to Palestine and brought back some pictures of a Jewish settlement that is run on the community system.

A letter from Ruth says she has been laid up for a fortnight with a dose of flu but is better again. Denis is still at Potchefstroom and is anxious to get to Barberton. I think that is the last depot before embarkation.

A letter from Mary says she has benefitted by her holiday and change. They have a lot of rain there during her absence. They had 15 inches during March and April. The average for the year is about 40 and 50 inches. A first class spot I should imagine for rheumatism and kindred complaints. A presentation was made to a staff nurse (Native) who left during Mary's holiday and in returning thanks for the gift, she remarked that Dr Aitkin could not carry on the work of the hospital as he does "if he had not such a decent wife as Mrs Aitkin". Mary adds that the nurse was not an educated girl. The garden at the hospital must be a grand sight – it certainly should be with such a rainfall. Mary is thrilled with it.

Olive is still in Port Elizabeth. She is staying with Eileen Saunders. She is far from well and does not mention anything about coming back yet.

Wednesday morning. We had a very interesting time with Mr Armstrong last evening. He told of the many places he had visited, the sort of country, the people etc. The railways are wider than our South African ones and the trains travel much faster. He went from Cairo to Luxor – 600 miles – in one night. He visited the tombs of the kings, the pyramids, Alexandria, Palestine, etc. There are practically no fences in Egypt. Along the banks of the Nile are small allotments for farmers. All animals are tethered. Cattle are mostly Indian buffaloes, these supply them with milk. They are smooth skinned animals and are ridden, in fact they ride almost anything. Their mode of greeting each other is peculiar. First they shake hands with you then place their right hand on their heart, then shake hands again and again place their hand on their heart. Then they commence talking. There are comparatively few pure Egyptians, the population is mostly Arabs. They seem to be a poor lot of people. Cairo is a dirty place. Shops are mostly small and goods are displayed on the side walks, so much so that pedestrians often have to walk in the road. He knows the workshop where Rex works and has been there. There is a lake nearby which is very salty and not nice to bathe in. He has been in the water there. Both his sons are up there but he does not know exactly where they are, in fact they may not tell each other. It often takes a long time for them to get into touch with them even by post. All along the coastal belt, which extends about 60 miles from the sea, is fertile country but beyond that, it is desert sand with tracks all over the place. Much more he told us but as you are not likely to be taking a holiday that way, I need not enlarge. I asked him if he thought he would be able to settle down after the war. He said he had no wish to move from his own doorstep.

I have purposely refrained from referring to Aunt Emmie's op until I could give the latest report. I hope to hear this morning how she is getting on but at the time of writing this (9.30 a.m.) nothing has come to hand. I shall get Aunt Eliza presently to hear what she has heard. Later. Have just returned from Market Street and the news is very good. Doctor is satisfied that her sight will be restored and that "she will be able to see like a girl of 21". She has not been happy in hospital but that is understandable. She has had a private nurse with her each night who has been most useful and comforting to her.

Aunt Eliza was out in her chair to see the Cooks who are leaving for East London for a few months. She also went to the park and bought some tree stumps for winter firewood. Letters from Grace and Dot to hand report all well.

Must close now with lots of love to all. Dot had a happy birthday..

We are both keeping well. Not had any frost yet. Goodbye,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 19th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Tuesday evening, Mom has gone to bed and it is 9.30 so I shall not get far tonight. It is not cold tonight but we have had a fire and it is nearly out. This afternoon, we had another of those awful dust storms and only eight points of rain. A large tree along the boulevard in front of the Masonic Hotel was blown down and crashed on the iron fence bending it up. No one was injured but it shows how dangerous big trees can be. We were only discussing trees at the Council committee yesterday and I pointed out that large Blue Gum at the top of Kruger's land which is dangerous. One big arm did fall a few months ago. I have attended no less than ten committee meetings in the last two days. They are all very interesting but take a lot of time.

Bladens apples are quite finished for this season. I have had about 600 to send away and for ourselves. Am glad you all have enjoyed them so much.

Olive is still away and no word when she is returning. Have asked her if she intends going to Fish River Fete on Ascension Day – June 6th. We hope to make a plan to go if it is only to see the friends and relations. I see the Groenkloof stock is advertised for sale on June 15th. Suppose it does not interest Douglas.

We had all the Armstrongs to supper one evening. He has been in this evening to listen to the war news. He has to leave again for Pretoria on 4th but does not expect to be sent north again. He is very interesting to talk to.

The Sunday School picnic on Monday will be held in the Show Ground as motor buses are not obtainable. We hope to take a walk over.

Wednesday morning. Alan Hudson is ten years old today. Many happy returns Alan. We wonder if Dot will bring the children down these coming holidays. Dot, in her last letter, says when Douglas and Evelyn called her up on the phone on the evening before her birthday, she was busy making a cake so she had to leave that in the oven whilst she cleared off to the call office. They have not the phone in the house. Reg will not have his new teeth until the end of June she says. I guess he is getting thin on it.

Grace says baby Charles has mumps. What next will he get? Jean is having a course of injections for catarrh and may have to go to Bloemfontein for some treatment.

Douglas says the Amblers have given up their house in Pretoria but does not say if they have been transferred or gone to live at an hotel. They saw Trixie and her two beautiful sons. Douglas is to have another "op" on his eye. He was also X-rayed whilst there and the result was negative – satisfactory for which we may all be thankful. They have had hailstorm on the farm whilst they were away and damaged some of the crop. However he is able to report that he has a good crop of mealies while his neighbours did not trouble to sow. Old Mr T.B. Collen has agreed to sell his farm. They will miss them very much when they leave. They have been such nice people and so friendly. We had our first frost last week – it only just touched 32 degrees and did not do any damage. The garden is very wet and the trees and vines are nearly shed of their leaves after yesterday's wind storm. I registered 14 points of rain.

You will be delighted to hear that Aunt Emmie is in her own home again but will have to go to hospital again in about three weeks time for the "needling" process which will not detain her very long I think.

On Sunday afternoon we called to see Rev and Mrs Sorry. Mrs had been troubled with her feet but is easier now, having obtained some supports for the bridge of her feet which give the necessary support. Mr says that his youngest son is now stationed in the Isle of Man. They send their regards to Grace and Ted.

Mr Blunson writes that his son, Oloff, is amongst the men repatriated from Italy. He was in the ambulance division. We hope to see him as he pass through here.

We are inviting the Sorrys here one of these days. He says he is getting much better as a result of his stay here. We are hoping he will be able to assist with a service or two when the Rev Briggs is away in the country.

Grace writes that baby Charles is better of his mumps. They have had lots more rain since she last wrote. All the children are well but she has been upset through eating avocado pears in the evening.

This morning we have had such a nice letter from Denis' girl to whom we wrote on the death of her Mother. We hope she will be able to visit us sometime. Ernest has had a very interesting letter from Guy giving some account of the trip north. I suppose Arthur and Donald were in the same convoy. They are not allowed to say where they are going.

I do not often refer to the war news but the events of the last few weeks have certainly brought the end much nearer. Everyone must be shocked at the awful loss of life on both sides and can only hope that the world will soon learn that there are other and wiser ways of settling disputes. I shall be greatly surprised if there is not a revolution in Germany before long.

Have just heard over the air that Churchill is to be broadcasting this evening at 6.30 from Washington. Must listen in to that.

No letters from Uitenhage for a couple of weeks I think. Dot's usual letter has not come today, probably will tomorrow.

As I have an appointment for Sunday and news is scarce this afternoon, I will close and post early.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday May 26th, 1943

My Dear All,

It is Tuesday afternoon and there has been a Scotch drizzle all the afternoon. Mom has just come back from her women's meeting in the Church and they had a good gathering in spite of the wet. That is a good sign of the interest they take in their gathering. I have to go to Council meeting at 7.30 so there will not be much time for adding after I come home.

Wednesday morning. It just on 11 when I got home last night and this is the first morning that I have had to switch on the light to dress by. I have the light on now as I am writing. It is raining nicely and it is too wet to go outside at present.

Of course Monday, having been a holiday, we shall not expect any letters until late tomorrow. The Sunday School picnic on Monday was very nice – not quite so many there as last year but a perfect day. It is an easy walk to the Show Ground and I think everyone enjoyed the food and sports. Joyce and Raymond were there and we elder ones walked as far as the railway subway where a new bridge is being constructed where the National road to the north will pass through. The old culvert was far too narrow and dangerous. Storm water will be conveyed under the bridge by means of a causeway. It has been in the course of construction for about two months and by the look of things, it will be another two or three before it is finished.

Rex will be 20 on June 10th and Arthur 23 on June 22nd, just the age I was when I left England for South Africa. By the way, it will be 56 years tomorrow that I arrived in Cradock. I wonder if Arthur and Rex have met in Egypt. Hard lines if they have not.

Lynne writes that she may be making a change for another job – shorthand and typing. She does not say if the job is in Queenstown or not but if she gets it, the probability of her visiting us in the school holidays is remote. Needless to say we shall be disappointed.

Grace writes that her new glasses are a success. Of course she, like the rest of the womenfolk, are busy sewing, mending, and making garments for the children. Everyone has to economise in these times of shortage of material.

Reg and Dot have been down to Johannesburg to fetch Mrs Hudson who is now with them and does not seem any the worse for the change in altitude. Mr Watts, Dot's neighbour, lost his mother after a couple of days illness in Port Elizabeth. She had been spending some time in Potgietersrus.

We had a very nice letter from Dorothea and I have obtained a copy of the South African Outlook which published an obituary of her late Mother. She was no doubt an outstanding lady. Am passing it round for you to read. Denis is at Barberton Camp. Do not know if he will get embarkation leave or when he will be going north.

Mary tells of a tragedy which befell a kitten. The doctor and his little son had gone for a walk. The servant had occasion to open the frig door when out dropped the kitten. Evidently the child had thought it a safe place for his pet. I presume it was suffocated or frozen to death. By the way, we have received consignment note of another box of fruit coming from there but no letter has arrived yet. We must wait and see.

It is 13 months since we have seen a mouse in the house but last week we got two and none since, so I hope we have finished with that trouble. Ted accounted for the last rat we saw on October 3rd 1941. We are not anxious to see any more of them. They are still troublesome at Aunt Eliza's.

Aunt Emmie has written since her return home from hospital. She has to go in again for the needling op after which she will have her new glasses. We are all very thankful that the op is over with such satisfactory result.

8.30 must now stop for breakfast. Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday June 2nd, 1943

My dear All,

I am going to try another experiment with my weekly letter. I cannot get my usual size paper so will try this foolscap size and give wider spacing as I know by the copy I retain that when typed on both sides, it is not too clear. If I can arrange when typing the reverse side to get it in between these lines, I think I shall be able to get nearly as much matter or "copy" as they would say in the printing office. So here goes for this week. I am also using new carbon paper so I hope no one will have cause to complain. Of course I am typing nine copies each week and carbon paper does not last too long and is expensive, but I will try my best to give satisfaction.

Mary tells a sweet tale of little Christopher, Dr Aitkin's hopeful. He was 'helping' her to stick on extra gum paper so as to use the envelopes a second time. When he went to his Mother to help her, he was found sticking stamps on to the arm of her Morris chair. Some time ago the Cape Times published a series of comic sketches under the title of "Antics of Anthony". Perhaps he had been looking at some of those.

We are glad to hear via Lynne, that Douglas has been riding horseback lately. I guess it is some long time that he did that instead of using his motorcar. The doctor's medicine is also doing him good.

Joyce hears from Dudley more or less regularly now. In a recent letter he says he is wearing the same clothes in which he was taken prisoner. Poor chap, I guess they are pretty threadbare by now. Perhaps when our army invades Italy, they will all be released. Hope so at any rate.

On 13th it will be six years since Uncle Herbert passed away and on 17th, it will be twenty years since Uncle James died. How quickly the years do fly.

Olive writes that she is staying at Humewood Mansions for a week. No word as to when she is likely to return. Her sister, Hilda and family, have come over for the sale on 16th and Cyril and Mildred have brought Uncle Walter back from their farm. We do not know what plans will be made for looking after him when they return to their farm which is about 200 miles from here. That is the Daniel farm. They have returned the sideboard we lent to Olive some year or two ago. We have put it back in its old place in the dining room. Mom wants to store her reserve stock of crockery in it. All Uncle Walter's farms, except Groenkloof, have now been sold. The stock is to be sold on 16th and I guess will fetch top prices as he has good stuff and the market is high. We wonder what George will do as he will probably have to buy stock for himself.

Hair pins are a scarce commodity so I have tried to make some for Mom. They are nothing grand as you may expect but she is using them.

Recently I had to inspect a building in River Street and incidentally saw over the monumental masons works. So next day I took Mom to see how the stones are prepared. It is all done by machinery, even to the chipping of the stones. An upright iron shaft revolves at a moderate speed, at the end of the shaft is a block of a hard composition – circular – which I understood is composed of very hard grains of steel. Water is constantly flowing whilst this grinding process is in operation. Finer grades of steel are used as the surface gets more and more ground down until at last, a sort of emery dust is used to give it a final polish.

I forgot to mention last week that Rev and Mrs Sorrie paid us a visit last Sunday week. They were very interested in the Golden Wedding photos and family news. He has not been too well the last week.

Bill Murray spent the weekend with Dorothy. The baby is just about the same, poor little thing. Ernest has been down with flu for a few days.

I started this letter this morning (Monday) and so far as I can see, the experiment is not going to be a success. Will try something else next week. Perhaps I will be able to get all I want to say on one side if I use single spacing and so do without backing. The Hultzers have offered us seats for Fish River on Thursday. Hope it will be a day like last Monday. Today has been a miserable day – windy and cold. Have had the flags flying in honour of Union Day. Hilda Daniell was down this afternoon and says perhaps Olive is coming back tonight. We shall not expect any

post before Thursday owing to the holidays and of course Thursday is also a holiday so we are in for a dry time so far as news goes.

I have exchanged my life assurance policy for a fully paid up one. This means that I have no more premiums to pay but it also means that at death, there will be less to come to the estate. I strongly advise anyone not to insure when they get to mature age but rather put the amount of such a premium aside – Union Loans or something similar – as a better policy than taking a life policy as the premium is very heavy when over 60 years of age. I was badly advised when at Cape Town. However it will save me paying out approximately £20 per annum.

Mrs Ousthuizen, the Manageress of the Premier, has had a sad loss, her husband was the driver of the passenger train that left here on Friday night and both he and the stoker were killed in a collision at Tafelberg about midnight. He was pinned down in the engine and must have been killed instantaneously. We are all very sad for Mrs Ousthuizen. In the midst of life we are in death.

Love from
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as 9th June 1943

My dear All

I want to save as much space as possible so as to get as much news as possible and save backing the letter. I have counted the number of lines that I can get onto the smaller sheets that I used to use but this longer sheet will not equal what I used to get on both sides of the smaller one. However, it may save your valuable time and also some straining of your eyes. So much by way of introduction. It is now Tuesday morning and jolly cold but it only just touched freezing point. We have experienced some sharp frosts but as the ground is still fairly wet, it has not done any damage. We have put in four varieties of seedlings and hope they will grow. They cost 1/- per 100 and were advertised by a local farmer. If any of you want any, let me know and will try to get some for you. Olive returned by herself last week and is still far from well. She says she cannot look after her father for some time, her nerves are quite done in. She has suggested that perhaps Uncle Bertie's daughter, May, might take on the responsibility for a while. She wants to get right away for a time. She will have to go out to Groenkloof for the sale on 16th as she is the only one who knows about the stock. She met such a lot of kind people in Port Elizabeth. She had no idea there were so many nice people she says.

Douglas and Evelyn write that they have had exceptional rains for this time of the year. They anticipate an early spring. Grace also says they have had lots of rain. Brian Ambler has enlisted and is now in training. His people are living in Cape Town at present. Douglas also says that they have had such heavy dews that it has kept their rainwater tanks full. Some dew. Evelyn's sister, Mrs Edwards, has had news that her son has been awarded the D.F.C. He has been in the R.A.F. for two years and was amongst the men fling over Berlin. She is very proud of the lad. I sent a typed letter to Rex on May 6th and he got it on May 19th and replied on 21st which we received on June 2nd. This seems very quick – much quicker than to and from England. Both he and Arthur have their birthdays this month. Rex complains of the flies being so bad. He says there will always be flies in Egypt so long as there are Arabs in the country. They will not kill flies because they say that Mahomet sent them. He says they pick them off – also lice – and throw them onto the ground but kill them, no. The two brothers have not met yet. Rex says that Cairo and Alexandria are “out of bounds”. He speaks of going for another visit to Palestine. A letter has come this (Tuesday) morning from Arthur. He says he has been a month in Egypt but has not yet been in touch with Rex but hopes to soon. He is with a very nice group of Vryburg boys who include Reg's brother, Rickett – who sends his greetings to me. They are living in tents and compare the scenery with South Africa. Stones and sand seem to be the main “crops”. Where there is cultivation, every yard of ground is made use of and the crops seem to be very good.

Yesterday was fairly busy one for me. In the morning the Government Commission re health services sat and I was the first to give evidence re the use of intoxicating liquors in reference to health. They said it had been emphasised by others in different parts of the country. The Town Council and Hospital Boards also gave evidence. I did not represent anybody except myself. I hope it may have some effect. In the evening I had the pleasure of presenting two special badges to members who have served 300 hours voluntary service to the Red Cross Society. Miss Heckrath and Miss P. du Plessis, Chairman and Secretary respectively. It was quite a nice little function. Mrs Sekkeer, Aunt Kate's sister, arrived at the Premier on Friday of last week. We have seen a good deal of her here. She has travelled a great deal and is a great talker. She finds it too cold to her liking in Cradock so is returning to Port Elizabeth tomorrow. Rev Briggs was best man at her wedding. I have not mentioned the Fish River Fete I think. We had a perfect day so far as the weather was concerned and the financial result was equally satisfactory, over £240 being taken. Of course this sum was not all realised by the sale of produce etc as they collected in cash about £150. The lunch, which is always a strong feature of the Fete was quite up to standard. It was a friendly affair. I bought a quantity of meats etc for various friends. We were pleased to see Aunt Agnes there. I had a long chat with her and she certainly seemed brighter than she has been for a long time. She says she does not regret that she took my advice and had the operations. Mrs Willie Saunders was not there as her son-in-law, Florrie's husband, died at King William's Town the day

previously. As we came home, Mr Hultzer motored us to the top of Oukop at Mrs Kissack and her sister had not been up before. Aunt Kate has taken the step-mother back to Grahamstown. Every year she spends the summer at Grass Ridge. Aunt Gladys Norman was laid up the day after the Fete. She does not appear to enjoy very good health lately.

Well, I think I have done enough for this week – so far as this letter is concerned. I have to prepare for a special library committee tomorrow evening for the revision of the constitution and rates of subscription. This will take some time to prepare. I have been working at it for a while but must now finish it.

Hoping you are all well in the various homes and with lots of love to each and all and hoping for letters as usual tomorrow, I say “so long”.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday June 16th, 1943

My dear All,

Tuesday morning finds me sitting at my desk before breakfast starting my epistle. The sun does not rise until nearly eight. We have had very little frost but cold seasonable weather. Monday it looked as though we were in for a change and might have rain but it has not matured. We must expect much colder nights. You will be interested in hearing that Graham Armstrong is considered being over age for military service and his health is not as good as it was when he signed on. He is being discharged and expects to return home any day now. He has got the appointment of Warden at the Addo Game Reserve, near Port Elizabeth. They are very pleased about it. He is to start on July 1st for two months trial. Cynthia was 15 on Sunday and will go to Rocklands as a boarder until the end of the year when she hopes to pass her J.C. examination. We shall miss the family very much. I guess they will find it very lonely and hope there will not be any accidents with the elephants. Both the sons are up north and have signed on for service anywhere in the world. We are sorry to say that Ted's Uncle, Rev Sorrie, has been very unwell the last fortnight. Mostly stomach trouble but he came to Cradock on account of having had a nervous breakdown in Port Elizabeth where he resigned his church. We went to see them on Sunday afternoon but as he was sleeping at the time, of course we would not disturb him. We went to see Miss Holmden who lives at the corner of Bree Street and Cross Street, where Harold had that nasty accident when the spike of the railing punctured his arm. She has been a book-keeper at Cull and Kews and firms before them for many years – probably over 40 – and ruined her health. The valve of her heart is said to be leaking. Mom saw her in bed. Then we went to see the new baby at Mrs Peagens, a lady who was staying at Mrs Derecourts. Her husband is in the Navy stationed at Port Elizabeth. They have been very friendly ever since we met them there. Mrs Seller left on Wednesday as she was not comfortable at the Premier. She was given an outside room and the door had been freshly painted and would not close at night etc. We saw a good deal of her and she had some meals with us here. I am sorry to say that Jim Butler has been very ill at Zonderwater. Fortunately his Colonel is a doctor and partner of the Dr Jim goes to in Cape Town. Four stones have been removed and a letter I had from him recently says he is better and hopes to get sick leave and go home for a while and also visit his Mother at Graaff Reinet.

Dot has kindly sent Mom some hairpins so I am not making anymore at present. Grace has also sent us a rubber hot water bottle. They are unobtainable here. Dot fears that her pawpaw trees have been damaged by the cold weather they have had. Douglas and Evelyn report rain still about but they hope rain will not fall at present. They have sent us one of Arthur's letters which is very interesting. Arthur takes great interest in the farming up there. If I can find room, I will copy some of his comments for general information. Joe sent Dot the Golden Wedding film and others of interest. Mr Watts has a projector so was able to show them, they all seemed interested in them. Ted has applied for his annual holiday. He has been working twelve hours a day recently. No paint is available for doing up the house, no petrol to go anywhere and money too is scarce. Lynne says she has not got another job yet and may perhaps come to us and Grass Ridge for the holidays. She will be very welcome both here and at Fish River. Am on the lookout for a seat in a car from Queenstown for her if possible. I gave a statement at the Government Commission recently on health etc. pointing out the effects of drinking on the subject. Our Mayor was nominated for Parliament on Monday. Hope he gets in in preference to the Nats.

I had a bad attack of indigestion last Friday through eating kippers but am glad to say am better now. Was able to attend seven Council committee meetings on Monday and two this morning. It is now past dinner time (Tuesday). Quite nice sitting out on the lawn in the afternoons but it is cold indoors.

Groenkloof sale of stock tomorrow. Perhaps Uncle Walter will spend the day with us here. I had hoped that Douglas would have come down for it as he wanted some pole Angus bulls but evidently he cannot get away. Douglas and Evelyn are looking forward to the children coming home for the holidays on 25th. It must be very quiet on the farm with all the children away. We are trying the experiment of having three dinners per week at the Premier, Sundays, Wednesdays and

Fridays. So far it seems satisfactory. Hope there will be a good post from the various families tomorrow, Wednesday. Raymond had a party on his 7th birthday last week. Have not heard of his being upset after it. He had a number of his little friends to tea and had quite a good time. Last year the last letter Joyce had from Dudley was written for Ray's birthday. How lovely if they can be altogether for his next anniversary.

Arthur and Rex have not yet met but write to each other. I heard this morning over the wireless that the 6th Brigade were on parade yesterday in Cairo and made a good impression. No doubt they did. The recent operations in the neighbourhood of Italy must surely hasten the end of the war. I am fearful for the safety of our prisoners of war being in the danger zone with the invasion of Italy. Sunday is Remembrance Day for the Prisoners of War.

I am busy typing revised rules of our Public Library and have another meeting here tomorrow night and hope to finish the job this week.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday 23rd June 1943

My dear All,

My experiment in typing on one side of the sheet and on longer sheets seems to have met with general approval from those who have commented on the change, so for the present I shall continue. My dear Mother always disapproved of sending any letters to the Cape unless both sides of the sheet was filled and no margin was ever allowed to go without something written on it. However things have changed since then. Postage was 6 pence half an ounce in those days. I am starting this on Monday afternoon and according to my diary, this is the shortest day of the year. This and yesterday are certainly the most drear, damp and uncomfortable. Yesterday we had the fire in the dining room going about 4 and Mom did not feel equal to facing the cold so stayed from service in the evening. She has gone to her W.A. meeting this afternoon. For three hours I had to sit in the Council Chamber as a court to hear objections to the new Municipal voters roll. No objections were made. I hear there is snow on the mountains and it feels like it too. I am sitting with my heavy greatcoat on and warm slippers. Shall start the fire shortly. The maximum temperature yesterday was only 51. There is an old saying in England that "as the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen". I hope it does not get much colder but suppose it will. One day last week I kept account of the number of calls I had paid in one ordinary mornings work, it totalled to 19 done in one and half hours. Not too bad. All were on business of one sort and another.

Roy, we hear has now a pair of football boots cast off from his cousin. He may develop into a Rugby champion. Grace has secured a new dog which they have christened "Winch" short for Churchill. Someone had a dog that they called Julius and when the thief entered the house, they called Julius Cesar. Dot says Mrs Hudson senior is returning to Johannesburg shortly and they are going with her. Alan is also going as he is to represent his school at a party given in connection with funds the school raised for war funds – I think Red Cross work. Evelyn sent us one of Arthur's letters from Cairo. I enclose extracts from same. A copy of some appeared in Saturdays Midland News. Both brothers write very interesting letters. I posted to both of them last night by air mail. Lynne writes that she hopes to come to us on July 2nd and stay a week. She has not found another job at present.

Uncle Walter's sale of stock last week was a financial success. He did not go to it. George has bought Groenkloof so now everything has been sold except the house in town. Hilda and family are returning to their farm on Tuesday and Olive has not yet been able to make any arrangements for someone to look after Uncle.

Aunt Emmie is out of hospital and the final op is declared to be satisfactory. She had not got her new glasses when last we heard. This month we have been having three mid-day meals a week at the Premier: Sundays, Wednesday and Friday. The other days we eat at home but Mom does more cooking than I think she should.

Tuesday afternoon. Yesterday was another bad day so far as climatic conditions are concerned. The maximum for the 24 hours was only 48 and the minimum 40 degrees. I have not had time to look for stranger records. We have had ¼ inch rain in the last two days.

Letter from Aunt Emmie today. She is rejoicing in sight restored. Her experience is similar to mine when the glasses were being tested – it is wonderful – she exclaimed. The doctor was very pleased that no complications had intervened and that everything was so satisfactory. He says she must come again after she has the glasses which will take about a fortnight to make. She is having two pair made in case she has the misfortune to break or lose one. I hope the expense has not been too great for her finances. I had a trip by car with Councillor Stock to inspect a Council's property which needs repairs. It only took about a couple of hours and we have to report on same at council meeting this evening. Our Mayor is very busy trotting round the constituency in connection with his nomination for Parliament. I hope he gets in. Another nice letter to hand from Rex today dated June 9th acknowledging our birthday greetings. He has not seen Arthur yet. They have been in quarantine owing to an outbreak of smallpox. He was off on holiday to Palestine for his second visit there. No further word of Jamie but hope he is home on leave by now.

We were without our maid for some days – sick – and the boy was also away one of the three days he is supposed to work. However we have managed to carry on without them. The boy works three days at Olive's and three with us. Of course there is very little to do in the garden now. Must get the vines pruned soon.

Hilda has asked if we will sell our Esse stove as a friend of hers near them would like to get one. They are quite unobtainable at present owing to war conditions. We shall no doubt hear from her in due course.

Fancy the King being in Malta, what risks he is running. Shall not be surprised if Smuts will not be going up there as soon as the Election is over. It is to be hoped the United Party is returned by a substantial majority. The result of the Election will not be known until nearly the end of July. Unfortunately the prisoners of war will not be able to vote. I do hope none of their camps will get bombed by mistake – it seems quite possible such might happen. What a pity the Italians cannot surrender and so hasten the end of the war.

Well I fear I am near the bottom of my sheet so must close with heaps of love to you all,
Dad

Notes from a South African lad's letter from "Up North". 23rd June 1943.

We subscribe to an Egyptian newspaper which costs about two pence per day so we are kept in touch with the outside world. A party of ten of us went for a trip to Cairo and the sight of the city has left me with a very poor impression of the place. The poverty and conditions in which the people live is something awful, I have never seen anything like it. There are parts of the town which appear fairly respectable.

I must give them credit for their agricultural development. This is well worth seeing, their lucerne crop, wheat and cotton were excellent and this in spite of the fact that they have not modern agricultural implements. Every little bit of ground is used. It must be wonderfully fertile. I saw ploughing going on in several places and wished I have got nearer to see what it was like but it must have been very primitive. In front of the plough, two small cows were pulling on a yoke about nine feet long. The yoke is coupled direct to the plough by a desselboom. No tou leur. The cows just turn of their own accord at the end of the land. It is funny to see the camels play the part of a wagon in carrying the crop out of the land. It is surprising how much they put on the camel and how they get it to stick there. I must say they experience the same difficulty that I do and that is the load falling off, only in their case the camel falls too. I actually saw this.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday June 30th, 1943

My dear All,

The end of the half year is upon us and the terrible war still with us. When it will end no one can foresee but all hope it won't be long. We are all naturally anxious for the safety of our relations and friends as well as whole army as so many are Prisoners of War in Italy. Joyce had a postcard from Dudley this week dated April 1st saying he was well but was still hoping for parcels she had posted long ago. I guess letters will be difficult to get through now that our armies are advancing upon Italy. It is to be hoped that the prisoners will not be shifted to Germany.

Mom tells me I made a mistake in my last in stating that Alan was to represent Potgietersrus school. It should have been Norman. Dot says that Anthony's sister and brother will most likely be going back with their mother who is up on leave and she looks to put them in a convent. Dot has had Anthony for two years. I think there is about 18 months still to go. She will miss him when the time comes to part with him. Dot also says that if Mom – who has always been fond of mustard – wants more, the price has gone up to 16/- a pound. I wonder if the manufacturers are using stocks for mustard gas? The Collen family, we hear, are moving to Queenstown. They will be sadly missed as they have been such nice neighbours to Douglas and Evelyn. Reg expects to be able to bite properly this month. I hope his dentures will be satisfactory. Ruth says they have to leave Lexham House as the place has been sold and Mrs Elliott – the proprietress, is going to live in the Annexe herself. We will let you know her new address when we hear. Mr MacKenzie may be elected as Chieftain of the Caledonian Society of South Africa. Denis is still at Barberton Camp and is itching to go north. He is now a fully fledged Lt. Grace reports colds and changeable weather. Ted is going to Zululand for his holiday and probably Pam will go with him.

We had a surprise on Sunday morning. A Mr Robinson, a missionary from China was staying at the Premier and Mr Briggs had arranged with him to take my appointment in church so I went round to fetch him. He told us that a lady arrived on Saturday who was some connection of ours. We were puzzled to know who it could be. She had been placed at our table and was waiting to meet us as we went to dinner. It was no other than Mrs Chatterton, Ted's Aunt. Mr Irons senior's sister. She was living at Warner Beach near Doonside when Mom and some of the children were at iFafa Beach, close-by. She attended service and noticed someone whom she thought was Mr Sorrie but only seeing a back view of him, was not certain. Rev Sorrie went into the vestry to speak to Mr Robertson after the service so they did not meet. Of course we were able to satisfy her who it was. She had no idea that he was here or that he had had a nervous breakdown in Port Elizabeth. I saw Rev Sorrie in the Library yesterday (Monday) afternoon and he was equally surprised to hear of her and promised to go along to see her. Mrs Chatterton has been ordered away from Port Elizabeth for asthma and had been staying on a rest farm near town but it was too lonely to her liking. We shall look to see more of both. She has been living with her daughter in Port Elizabeth.

Joe tells of the arrival of the wreckage from the collision at Tafelberg. He says it will take weeks and cost thousands of pounds to effect the repairs. This was the engine of the train that killed the husband of the manageress of the Premier Hotel. He is interested in the news of the Armstrongs going as Warden at Addo Game Reserve. He knew the former Warden when he was working at De Beers in Kimberley. Roy is in Standard 3 and Joe is surprised at the tests in spelling etc which the child has to pass. Joe sent the Golden Wedding film to Dot and Mr Watts gave them an exhibition there. Joe would like to have some of Mr Watts' films to see. No doubt this will be done. At present no one can get any of the coloured films which of course are the nicest. He has not heard anything more about the Mafikeng man coming or his going there.

You will be interested in hearing that we have sold our Esse stove. A farmer in Tarkastad has bought it for £80. I am sending a copy of a famous plum pudding which Aunt Eliza thinks you may like to have, she highly recommends it. It was given her by the late Mrs Dersley and she calls it:

Dersleys Plum Pudding

1½ teacups of flour	1 small teaspoon of bicarbonate soda
1 teacup chopped suet	1 egg
¾ teacup of sugar	½ lb stoned raisins
	a pinch of salt

Mix all the dry ingredients together, beat the egg up with some milk and mix altogether. Put into a buttered basin, place a paper on top and steam for three hours. A tickey worth of suet is more than enough for this pudding when chopped.

Someone asked for a copy of Blodwen's floor polish. She writes that she has improved upon it by experience as follows:

One full tin brown shoe polish	one shredded candle	half a cup of paraffin
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Melt together in a tin that does not leak. On no account melt over an open flame.

Perhaps you would cut these out and put them in your cookery books.

Am glad to say Olive is better and has resumed her duties of looking after her father. She is expecting to have the telephone fixed up pretty soon as she got a doctor's certificate to say it was essential that she should have the phone in the house. She applied for it about three years ago. Mom and I went to a political meeting in the Town Hall last night in the interests of Mr Cull. It was a pretty rowdy affair in parts. One South African Party woman got up and took off her coat and went to the back of the hall and had a scuffle with a man who was making a disturbance. No damage was done. Senator Conroy made a good speech. I hope Cull will get in.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

Ruth's new address is 18 Somerset Street, Grahamstown.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 7th, 1943

My dear All,

The past week has been one of some disappointments, some surprises and some things to look forward to. We were looking forward to Lynne's visit last Friday and on Thursday afternoon we got a phone message from her saying she had secured another job in Queenstown and was to start on August 1st, so as she had a month to spare, she was going home that night. She however hopes to be able to come to us over some weekends. Of course she will not be entitled to her annual holiday for a year. She has a billet at an Auctioneer's office and of course will have her afternoon half holiday and Sundays free. Then we got Dot's letter saying she would have to give up the idea of coming to us as the trains were reserved for school children etc and so would have to put off the visit. So much for the disappointments.

In the evening, Douglas rang us up from Kimberley saying he might come down to see how we were getting on about the 19th – the date the children had to go back to school. He had not heard the news about Lynne going home but we have since heard from Evelyn that they met her at 3 a.m. in Cradock. So we have something to look forward to. We do not know if Lynne will come down with Douglas and go across from here to Queenstown. We shall wait and see.

Now for the surprise. We generally go to bed about 9.30, especially on Sunday nights. A little after ten I heard the phone ring and was quickly out of bed and groped my way to the phone – as sometimes if they do not get an immediate reply, they ring off “no reply”. I was surprised to hear Denis speaking from Grahamstown and more surprised to hear him say “I am getting married tomorrow afternoon in the Cathedral at 2.30 and we should very much like you and Grandma to come down.” Well of course there was not train at that time of night and the one that leaves here at 9.35 the next morning does not get to Grahamstown until about 5 p.m. so that was out of the question, the only alternative was to go by taxi. We had always understood that he had promised his Mother that they would not get married until he had passed his M.A. Degree but he said that circumstances had altered all that. He passes here next Friday morning on his way to Maritzburg from where they embark at Durban but of course we do not know when or where he will be going. So we had something to think about for the rest of the night. In the morning, I enquired the cost of the trip by taxi but Mom could not face the journey and back in the one day and the cost was pretty high so we decided, with great regret, to cut it out. We sent a small present by wire and the following telegram “very sorry cannot be with you. May your embarkation on a new chapter of life bring you safely to your desired haven”. So this is the first grandchild to be married and we hope everything goes well with them. We do not know if Dorothea is going as far as Maritzberg or what her plans will be. Had we known earlier, we might have arranged to spend the weekend in Grahamstown and could have had the pleasure of meeting all the clan. No doubt we shall hear in due course more about it. We are glad to hear that Ruth and John are comfortably settled in their new home.

I see I made a mistake about the date of Lynne's message – it was Wednesday afternoon not Thursday. Lynne's new address will be Waverley Private Hotel, 27 Ebdon Street, Queenstown from August 1st. Phone 00871. Douglas says they did not get a copy of my dear all of June 23rd. If I put two copies in anyone's letter, will you please send the duplicate to Douglas. The Collin family is not going to live in Queenstown as the sale of their farm did not go through.

Dot, Reg and family had a good time in Pretoria and Johannesburg last week. The boys were thrilled with the aeroplanes etc. Dot was able to get a pound of wool, which is very scarce these days. Mary Collett and May Trollip have each sent me a pair of knitted socks. I don't know why, I did not ask for them but they were very acceptable. I have offered to pay for the wool. Mrs Hudson senior is very pleased with Norman's playing the piano, he has a beautiful touch. Alan is better at sports. Dot says she is putting on weight – about time I think. Reg is still without his new grinders. Whilst they were away at Johannesburg, a very good friend of theirs passed away at the age of 83. Grace replying to a question from Dot, says she has still got her wedding dress but has only worn it once. Is she keeping it for one of the girls I wonder?

On his holiday on 7th, Uncle Walter fell in the garden early one morning. He had gone outside and Olive thought he was away a long time and went to investigate and found him on the ground. It was very cold and about six. It was with difficulty that she got him up. Fortunately he was none the worse but it shows how helpless he is but for all that, he will not let anyone help him. He never wears an overcoat or wraps up.

Just before Mr Metcalf died, he promised me £100 towards the cost of building rooms for the Native nurses in the Location. He was too ill to make provision in his will for this amount but I mentioned it to his son and the heirs have decided to honour the promises he made me. I said "but you only have my word for it." "That's quite good enough for me" he said.

Miss Metcalf's house was broken into again recently. She had gone to Port Elizabeth for a change and the same night it was burgled. The police have caught the boy – a brother of a picanin who stays about her house. She ought not to live alone as she does. Monday afternoon we got a wire from her at Humewood saying she was down with flu and would I let her servants and Miss Booth know, which of course I did. This is very unfortunate as she will miss voting for Mr Cull on Wednesday. We went to a political meeting last week and it was pretty noisy. Cull made a good fighting speech and deserves to get in but the Nats are very strong. We also went to see the film "In which we serve~" on Friday afternoon. It was a good picture, instructive in showing what our men have had to suffer. In the evening we attended a lantern lecture on China by the Missionary who took my appointment on Sunday. The views were exceedingly good and the talk instructive.

We have been having some terrible weather lately. Ten degrees of frost one night and bitterly cold winds. We hardly saw the sun for a few days. I wear mittens to keep the chaps off but it does not keep them from my heels and thumbs which are quite sore. However we have passed the shortest day so hope the weather gets a little warmer. So far this Tuesday morning the bulk of this letter has been done standing on the back stoep with the sun shining on my back. It is might cold at 6.30.

Mr Armstrong went to Addo with the secretary of the National Parks Committee on Tuesday last and came back on Saturday afternoon with a lorry to take the family and furniture down. They finished packing after supper and were going to sleep at Mrs Hartman's that night and go on the next morning to the farm. The Reserve is about 8,000 morgen. He has only taken on the position for two months' trial and from what he says, it does not look as though they will like to stay. Needless to say we shall miss them very much as they used just to drop in whenever they pleased and were very helpful in times of need. We had them in to supper before they left.

It is now known that the three Councillors who should have been elected in rotation in the usual course of events, had it not been declared by the Provincial Government otherwise, will not have to be elected in September. It was thought that all the nine Councillors would have to stand for re-election. I find that I am now due to retire at the end of August 1944, that is, of course, if I am willing to accept nomination again.

Tuesday evening. Olive's maid brought word that Uncle Walter was in bed so we went up to see him. Doctor had been in the morning and he was staying in bed all day. He complained of pains in his chest and had a very little sleep. Olive says the Dr is not satisfied with the condition of his heart and he must have a nurse if one is available. He seemed flushed when we were there and wandered a little in his conversation. Olive was hoping to take him to Mildred's farm today but that is quite out of the question.

I have put a notice of Denis' wedding in today's Midland News and am posting a copy of this to Ruth so that it will arrive before he leaves on Thursday evening.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 14th, 1943

My dear All,

I must begin early as on Wednesday afternoon I am going to see the Eastern and Western Provinces play a test Rugby match. The Mayor, being away, I have been officially asked to attend.

Well, I am pleased to say that on Friday morning I went to the station to see Denis pass through and to my surprise, Dorothea was with him. The train was about half an hour late and they were not dressed except in their dressing gowns etc. We did not know that she was going as far as Maritzburg with him. Mom did not go over, these early morning trains do not appeal to her. Of course I asked her to break her journey here on her return and we hope she will do so. She says she wants to do war-work after the end of the year when I understand she will be leaving the University. Her father is resigning from the Fort Hare appointment which he has held for, I think, ten years. From the few minutes I had with them, I judge her to be a bright pleasing affable girl and am sure we shall be very pleased with her. Of course no one knows when Denis may be embarking for the north or wherever he may be sent. There were quite a number of soldiers on the same train. Ruth has sent a few copies of the report of the wedding that appeared in the Grahamstown paper. The decision to get married on the Monday was only finally arrived at the day before, hence it was not possible to let us know in time to be there. I gave them some postcards to keep us informed of their movements.

Today, Monday, we have received a letter from Lynne saying that Douglas and Evelyn have both been laid up with colds but were better. They still hope to pay us a visit shortly. I presume they will have to come by train. I thought that perhaps Lynne might come this way to her new job at Queenstown but apparently she is going direct. Kingsley we hear has grown very tall. Evelyn also says that one of Dodie Masson's daughters has been on a visit to Metcalf's farm – presumably Glen Una. I did not know he was married. He is in the Bank at Kimberley. Arthur and Rex have not met yet. Today Rex was starting for Palestine on holiday. Dot's boys are again troubled with boils which are very troublesome things to contend with. They have had 1½ inches of rain recently. They are thinking of having a series of injections against colds as they seem subject to them. Reg has at last got his dentals fixed up to his satisfaction. Donald Hudson has got an extension of his leave so Dot is hoping that Mrs Hudson will return to Potgietersrus for her extended visit. We are sorry to hear that Mrs Gordon Amm has been dangerously ill. The family have been so kind to Reg and Dot and the boys.

We have not been troubled with rats since I put down some Ratnip poison. We found two dead in the pantry recently.

After the service on Sunday evening, we had a recital on the organ by a son of the late Rev Geo Robson of Cape Town. It was a real musical treat. He is a government auditor visiting here. His wife is with him. After service, she said she remembered attending service here when I took the Xmas service and Roy sang a solo. She was tickled at Roy afterwards saying "goodbye Grandpa". Ted and Pam are away on their holiday and hope they will have a good time. It is Ted's birthday on 26th. Rev Sorrie has gone to Cape Town to see a specialist as he has not been so well again lately. Mrs Chatterton too is thinking of settling here but as she has property in Pretoria, it is most likely she will go back there eventually. She often comes here after dinner to listen to the war news. Everyone is hoping that our South African soldiers may soon be released now that Sicily is being invaded. That would be good news. I don't think it will be long before Sicily surrenders.

So far did I get yesterday, now it is Monday morning, I have just taken the readings of the thermometer and find this is the second coldest night we have had, 22 degrees F. Today is Joyce Townshend's birthday, and last Sunday it was Dudley's. It is to be hoped he has spent it under more favourable conditions than his last. Then he was a Prisoner of War in Benghazi Hospital. Today I hope he realises that he is nearer being relieved by his friends than he was a year ago. The news this morning on the invasion of Sicily is good.

All our vines were pruned last week. Mr Muller started them on the 7th and hope we have a good crop again. Uncle Walter is better again but the doctor still visits him occasionally. He fell in his bedroom during one night. Olive is tied up very much as she feels she must not leave him. She

is far from well herself. Aunt Emmie has had another slight attack recently but is so pleased that her op has been such a success. I am using new carbon paper this week but it does not seem to be as good as what I have used before. I suppose we must blame the war which seems to be responsible for anything and everything that goes wrong. After breakfast it is nice working on the back stoep but mighty cold first thing in the morning. We have fire in the dining room every night. Joe write that Merle has been spending some of her holiday in Port Elizabeth with Maisie's little girl. Roy has to wear glasses for reading and writing. Blodwen encloses the following

Refreshing Cool Drink

“Squeeze fresh oranges, dilate with water and add finely chopped up mint in the drink. This is delicious and tastes like granadilla flavour”.

Roy is thrilled with Joe telling him imaginary stories of Douglas hunting baboons. Douglas is a hero in Roy's eyes. He was surprised at the news of Denis marriage. Hope to hear from the rest of the family tomorrow. If anyone wants some porcupine quills for making dolls furniture, please ask.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 21st, 1943

My dear All,

The football match which I went to see last Wednesday did not fascinate me sufficiently to cause me to stay longer than half time. There was a good crowd present and as I went to the sports ground, I counted just on 150 cars parked in the roadway and there were many inside the ground. However the Eastern Midlands lost the game by a fair margin.

Joyce Townshend spent a quiet birthday and received a number of letters etc. We all hope that her next anniversary will be celebrated with Dudley at home. Raymond is getting on nicely at school. He was punished recently for talking too much and had to sit with a yellow handkerchief over his mouth. What sort of punishment was meted out to some of your children?

Last week we received letters from Arthur and Rex, they had not met yet. Our Esse stove has been dismantled and gone. I am putting in a slow combustion boiler in its place. We have had cards from Denis and Dorothea from Maritzburg. Am sorry to say that Dorothea says she will not be able to come here on her way back as she is going via the Transkei. We must hope to have her some other holiday. She is continuing her studies at Rhodes University.

When I gave you the verses recently, Mom says we sing it to the tune No. 320 in the Methodist hymn book (Abide with Me). We have also substituted the following words for the second verse of hymn 917 "For those in peril on the sea":

O Spirit whom the Father sent,
To spread about the firmament
O Wind of Heaven, by Thy might,
Save all who dare the eagles flight,
And keep them by Thy watchful care
From every peril of the air.

We have also pasted slips of this inside all the hymn books.

You will be interested in knowing that David Biggs has passed his final exam and is now a fully qualified doctor. Hearty congratulations. On Friday morning last just after breakfast, Lynne phoned from Queenstown saying she was completing the month at her job at the School hostel and started her new work on August 3rd (Tuesday). She would like to spend the long weekend here if she can manage a lift over by car. So far I have not been able to hear of anyone coming across. The bowling club has cancelled all their visits for the duration. However she is on the look out from her end. She says that both Douglas and Evelyn were laid up during the holidays and Kingsley as well so it was fortunate that she was available to nurse them and run the house. She says her parents are looking to come to us arriving on Friday morning by train on the 23rd. No doubt we shall hear from them in due course. Dot says she may come down sometime whilst the boys are at school this term. All will be very welcome. Dot says that in addition to her other jobs of work, she is now acting Commandant of the local Red Cross organisation. I wonder if she will appear in uniform. Some smart young lady.

Wednesday morning. We have just been listening to the funeral service of the Governor General, Sir Patrick Duncan. It was most impressive. General Smuts' speech was most appropriate. The description of the whole function has come over perfectly. A most impressive ceremony.

We have received a letter from Douglas saying he is leaving Vryburg Thursday and will arrive here Friday about 9.30 a.m. He says they will not be able to stay very long. A letter has come for them from Lynne. Grace writes that Ted and Pam are having a nice holiday but unfortunately Ted has not lost his cough. She says he may have to take sick leave when he gets back. We are very sorry about this and hope there is nothing seriously wrong with him. Grace says that Jean and a little friend who has been staying with her in the holidays gave them a concert last Friday which was greatly enjoyed. It reminds me of similar efforts of our children in their young days. Grace says Ted and Pam are going to spend a few days at the coast so as to have some bathing. Here we are having it very cold. Last night was the coldest, 11 degrees of frost. No

bathing weather here. The Esse stove has gone and a slow combustion boiler erected in its place. We are shifting the electric stove into the fireplace which will be very convenient.

You will want to know how Uncle Walter is. He has not been at all well during the week and has either been in bed or lying on it most of the time. Dr is in attendance and is trying to relieve him. He is very patient and does not appear to suffer much pain but a good deal of inconvenience. Doctor gave a certificate a little while ago saying it was essential that Olive's application for a telephone – made about three years ago – should be installed at once. I backed this up with an official letter as Deputy Mayor and I am glad to say the phone has now been erected. Her number is 247. Olive had a Miss Jones staying with her for the past week but she is very much tied to the house as you can imagine. We go up as often as possible.

Dorothy Murray's baby has a tooth but is far from well.

It has been a very busy week for me as usual and last night was a special Library Committee to confirm the revised rules. They now have to be typed for final approval. Am getting Dorothy Murray to do this – of course to be paid for it.

Must now stop as paper is about finished.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

Noon and ice is still on the water in the birds' bath.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday July 28th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Monday evening and as Douglas is taking us all out to Fish River on Wednesday morning, I must finish off on Tuesday. There is not much time and there is a good deal of talking going on all the time. I do not expect to be able to finish the sheet this week. Well to business. We had word that Douglas and Evelyn would arrive on Friday morning by train but on Thursday evening, Douglas phoned from Kimberley saying they would arrive on the Friday evening train. We did not know the reason for the change until they arrived – at midnight, the train being two hours late. It appears that the train was half an hour late in arriving at Kimberley from Vryburg and they were informed that it would wait half an hour there. They wanted to phone to the children from the station and when they got back to the train, it had already left for Cradock. They tried to get a taxi in order to catch up to the train at Orange River Station but none had sufficient petrol for such a journey. So there was no alternative but to stay the night in Kimberley. All their luggage was still in their compartment but they managed to get it put off the train at Orange River and picked it up as they passed the next day. They went to the hotel they usually stay at when in Kimberley and the proprietors kindly lent them necessary sleeping attire. I stayed up to welcome them and after a hot bath, they went to bed. Douglas has come to see if he can secure a suitable bull and is hiring a taxi to take us all and Joyce on Wednesday to Uncle Norman's and then to Aunt Jessie and on to Herbert Duncan Collett's up Fish River where he expects to get what he wants. This will be a nice little change for us. We return the same afternoon. We are invited to lunch at Mrs Duncan Collett's. You may remember that her husband contracted fever up north and died there. Mr and Mrs Stock invited Mom and I to share a taxi tri on Friday to go to Port Elizabeth to see the Cavalcade in aid of War Funds. Mom could not stand the 200 mile journey each way in one day so we suggested that Douglas and Evelyn should take our place and they have agreed to this. I hope they have a nice day.

General Smuts is flying down from Pretoria to open the Show. They have booked to return home to Vryburg on Monday night. They hope Lynne will come over for the long weekend but she says she cannot get back to Queenstown in time to start her new job in time on Tuesday morning. They have had some chats over the phone. We are also wondering if Joe might run up for the weekend but have not heard yet. It would be nice if he could. Douglas and Evelyn spent Sunday morning at Aunt Eliza's and Joyce. They are pleased to see how well they are keeping.

Dot's letter was late last week. You will be sorry to hear that their kind neighbour, Mr Watts, ha a nasty gun accident recently. He and his son went for a shoot on a farm about 70 miles form Potgietersrus. The farmer lent the son a gun and whilst examining it, his father warned him to be careful as it might be loaded. It was and the bullet, after striking on the stoep, rebounded and passed through his leg. As he was sitting at the time it is fortunate that the bullet did not fracture any bone or muscle. He was driven back to town and has to lay up for some time. I phoned to my friend, Mr Carter, Manager of Lennons Port Elizabeth to see if he could recommend someone who could help him in his chemist's business but no one was available. However it might have been much worse.

Olive took us and Uncle Walter for a spin as far as the Egg Rock recently. Uncle is very quiet and seems to suffer a good deal from rheumatic pains. He sleeps and rests on his bed a good deal.

Tuesday morning. What wonderful news we are having from Sicily. Surely the "resignation" or probably the dismissal of Mussolini must hasten the end of the war. It is to be hoped that the liberation of our "boys" will soon follow. Another interesting letter has come from Hilda Jim. Jim has had four weeks leave and has gone back to duty. I don't know why I have typed these few words in capitals.

At dinner time today, Mrs Chatterton brought us a telegram she had received from Frank Irons at Umfolosi, Zululand, saying his father died there this morning. The old lady is much distressed and asked me to let her brother-in-law, Rev Sorrie know the news. Douglas and I have just returned from his rooms and found him out having lunch with Mr and Mrs Aird at the cafe.

She had already seen him as she had gone to the telegraph with a message of condolence. Not knowing where Ted might be, I have wired to Kroonstad. We are glad that Ted has been to see his people and may have been with them at the last. No doubt we shall hear further details in due course. This is a very poor letter this week but it is difficult to concentrate. We are very glad to have Douglas and Evelyn with us and also glad that they have been able to stay so long.

Letter from Joe hoping they will be able to go and see them but hope they will be able to meet at the Cavalcade on Friday.

We are having plenty of wind again and cold night. We are all well. Lots of love to all, Douglas and Evelyn have booked to leave by Monday night's train.

Love from Dad

Am posting this on Tuesday 27th

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as at 4th August 1943

My dear All,

As I am late in starting this week, I shall have to be quick if I am going to catch the post on Wednesday afternoon. We have had the pleasure of ten days visit from Douglas and Evelyn. I hope they have enjoyed it as much as we have. At Kimberley on their way down, they missed their connection as they got out to phone to the children and whilst doing so, the train moved off so they phoned to us saying they would arrive Friday night instead of the morning. The train was two hours late so they arrived just after midnight. They took us for a spin in a hired taxi to Fish River calling first at Uncle Norman's for morning tea and thence to Aunt Jessie for dinner. Whilst at Katkop, Douglas bought three nice young bulls which are to be sent up after inspection. Mom stayed at Saltpansdrift with Aunt Jessie whilst Douglas, Evelyn and I went on to Mrs Herbert Collett's farm to see another bull. This farm is being very successfully run by Mrs Collett. Her husband died up north from enteric a few months ago. She is very capable. Her father from England lives with her and her only child – a girl – of about five. She has two incubators going and has about one thousand fowls. She has been sending to the Port Elizabeth market from 50 dozen eggs per week. She has got as much as 3/6 per dozen. That is good going. She is very bright in spite of having lost her husband. We got back home about five. I should have mentioned that Douglas has made her an offer for the bull which she is sending to the Bloemfontein sale next month and if it does not fetch more than her reserve price, he will take it. It is a beautiful animal. On Thursday afternoon, Douglas and Evelyn left by car with Mr and Mrs Stock for Port Elizabeth to see the Cavalcade. They slept in Grahamstown that night and saw Ruth and her husband. He phoned up Dorothea as she was not in town and so introduced himself that day. They arrived back at about ten on Friday night. Of course the trip was a great rush but they seemed to have enjoyed it. I should have liked to have seen it but it was too much of a rush. Mrs Stock stood the trip wonderfully well they say. They have been to see Aunt Eliza and Joyce a few times and have also seen some of our friends and relations. They left by the 9.30 p.m. train on Monday and will spend one night in Kimberley seeing the two children and get home on Wednesday.

We have had some cold days and also some nice ones. We had hoped Joe would have been able to come up but it could not be managed. He did phone one evening and asked Douglas and Evelyn to look him up on the way down.

Uncle Walter was rather better last week and Olive took him and us as far as the Egg Rock. He was none the worse for it. We are glad to hear from Dot that Mr Watts is getting on nicely after his accident. I was not able to find anyone who could go and help in his business. Dot does not say when she will be able to come down but it will probably be during this term, if at all.

Grace phoned on Tuesday evening last week and has since written giving particulars of Ted's father's death. It appears that he was well on the Monday as usual. Ted and Pam left that night for Durban and when they got there, had the sad news of his passing. Pam stayed with some of the family at Winkelspruit and Ted and his brother returned on Tuesday night to attend the funeral. We presume it was either a stroke or heart attack. No doubt we shall hear further particulars. We wonder what old Mrs Irons will do. It is not likely that she will be able to stay alone at Doonside. Ted has had an extra weeks leave granted him and will be home about the end of this week. Mr Irons' sister, Mrs Chatterton, is anxious for news.

We are sorry that Lynne could not manage to come over whilst Douglas and Evelyn were here but they had a few conversations over the phone. We are enjoying a tin of honey Douglas brought us from Vryburg. Am trying to get orders for him. At last Arthur and Rex have met in Cairo. They write home every week by airmail so it does not seem that they are so very far away.

The war news makes us hope that the Italians will be wise and surrender, if they do, it seems likely that our Prisoners of War may be released before very long. Joyce has not heard from Dudley for a long while but she has had a nice letter from one of the repatriated men who was in hospital with Dudley as late as April this year.

Douglas and I waited outside the Court House on Wednesday night last till about 1.30 a.m. for the Election results but it did not come until nearly two a.m. Fortunately neither of us caught

cold. Of course we are very sorry that Mr Cull did not win the seat. He lost it by 123 votes. The result as a whole is very satisfactory. Vryburg got its United Party man in.

Dorothy Murray has just called and says that Honor Biggs, who has been doing social welfare work in Port Elizabeth and now at Cape Town Board of Aid, is engaged to a man who is going north in connection with YMCA and Toc H work. David Biggs has passed his final doctor's exam.

Our opposite neighbour, Mr Vermuelen was buried this (Tuesday) afternoon. We did not know that he was ill or had died until we saw the hearse and mourners outside this p.m. I have been across to express our sympathy. He used to attend the Methodist services when he was on the Railway staff at Rosmead. Mrs Chatterton knows the Byrnes family and I think she is related to them in some way.

We all had afternoon tea at the Poplars on Sunday afternoon. Mr and Mrs Lidbetter and the new Matron of the Hospital were also there. I also went to George Webbers funeral service but did not go to the grave. Today it is quite warm and we have not had a fire this evening, the first time we have done without one for many weeks.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 11th, 1943

My dear All,

Douglas and Evelyn arrived home safely without missing any train. They had the children out from Beit House for the afternoon and caught the morning train from Kimberley. They seemed to have enjoyed the holiday and so did we. Who will be the next visitors?

We expect that Ted is home by now. What a sad ending it was and yet how glad he must be that he had gone in time to his father. We are glad to hear that his Mother is well provided for. No doubt later on she will go and visit them at Kroonstad.

Harold has been busy catching bees, I expect some caught him as well. Dot reminds me that once upon a time I was held up at a station and missed my train as I had spent the time in writing a letter. Her boys have had a very enjoyable holiday. Mr Watts has so far recovered that he is able to go to work and sit by his dispensing counter. He was very fortunate to get off so lightly. It is a mercy he was not killed. Reg and the boys have constructed a wall for practising their play at tennis. We shall expect to see some professional players as a result. The big Syringa tree in front of their house has been trimmed up and Dot says it is a great improvement. They have started saving money with the object of building a parsonage in view of getting a resident minister instead of a man coming from Pietersburg occasionally. Dot is President of the Women's Auxiliary and Deputy of the SAWAS. She does a lot of visiting on behalf of these and other organisations.

Did I tell you that whilst Douglas and Evelyn were here, Joe phoned. I am sorry I was out at the time and we were sorry he did not see Douglas and Evelyn when they were at Port Elizabeth. The brainwave that he had was the using of old boiler tubes for making rings for railway trucks to which tarpaulins are tied, instead of making them out of new metal. Have not heard if he has had any special reward for same. He says it is much more economical. He sees vines with new leaves and peach trees in blossom. Evidently they are much earlier than we are. He asks if any of our farmer friends can explain why it is that creamery butter is so scarce and difficult to get whilst farm butter is 3/6 pound. Eggs have come down in price. They are 1/6 dozen now here.

Hilda Jim writes that she has had Jim home on four weeks leave and is spoilt for resuming farm work. He has to inspect a squad of his men at Rosmead occasionally and so is able to visit his mother occasionally at Graaff Reinet. We hope he will come here sometime.

Grace expected Ted back last Saturday. Hope to hear from them before posting this. Her boys are also keen tennisites. They have experienced very cold weather as we have done. Today, Tuesday, it is bitterly cold.

Whilst Dot's boys were on the farm, the native servants killed a python 11 feet long and 12 inches round the middle. They are having the skin dressed. I read of a geography class being asked "where elephants are found" and a girl of nine replied "elephants are very large animals and it is difficult to lose them". Quite good I thought. Talking of elephants, the Armstrongs seem to be liking their job at the Addo Reserve. Their daughter is a boarder at Rocklands. They have started with a cow and some fowls of their own at Addo.

A letter from Rex today says that he and Arthur have at last met in Cairo but their time was very short. Douglas hoped that after the war it may be possible to arrange for Arthur to go to England before returning home and buy some special cattle for himself. Good idea if it can be worked. Evelyn quite approved of my beard – she had not seen it before. Douglas did not quite like the shape of it so the barberess has tried to improve the style. Mom approved.

We had such a strong wind yesterday that it loosened my aerial and made such a peculiar noise as I was listening. I heard something fall but could not see what had happened until this morning when an electrician was here and spotted it. I am still able to listen in but the reception is not as good as it usually is. He will put it right this afternoon.

It was 22 years ago yesterday – 9th – that Harold passed away. I remember it well. We had snow there that morning I tried to get him to see it falling but he could not. What a lot has happened since then. Fancy Denis married, he was only about three months old then. Now he is still at Maritzburg and is itching to get a move on. Mom's Mother and Father passed away at Grass Ridge on 9th and 10th respectively in August.

Joyce has just received a letter from Dudley acknowledging one from her dated January 24th. The date of his is censored. He is working on a farm and he says his hands are as hard as his work. He says he is well and has met some of his former members of his gun crew. Hopes to be home for their next holidays. She has also heard from a S/Sgt Holmes who lives at Pinelands, Cape, who was with Dudley as recently as April. He has been repatriated. He says Dudley was in fair health and those who work on farms get bigger rations and better too. Tom Webster had met S/Sgt Holmes and says they have nothing to worry about. If he is in the same camp as when he left, he is about ten miles from Brindisi and will be safe from being bombed. He says the Italian officers at the camps are "gentlemen".

We had Mr West, son of Mrs West, a prominent Friend in Cape Town who years ago was running Worcester House, Sea Point, a boarding house. Mom stayed there with Grace and Joe and Dot and Grace contracted measles and had to be left behind whilst Mom returned to Vryburg with the other children, and who by the way, got measles as well. Mr West is Inspector of the Barclays Bank. He stayed to supper with us. He is coming again.

Goodnight, paper is filled.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 18th, 1943

My dear All,

I wonder how many of you watched the eclipse of the moon on Sunday night? I did up to just on ten and it was a beautiful sight. The sky was perfectly clear and during the darkness, small stars made their appearance. We are getting a little warmer weather the last few days and if it continues, shall expect to see the trees and vines coming into leaf. We are needing rain, have had practically none in July or August. Both Mom and my hands have been more chapped than usual this winter. Perhaps being without a servant has necessitated our doing more of the detailed work than usual. However the maid comes each morning – except Sundays – but does not put in an appearance until about eight. She leaves about noon except on washing days. We still go to the Premier on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays for our mid-day meal and find it convenient. We always get back in time for the news at 1.15. The news has been quite good so far as getting the enemy out of Sicily. It is to be sincerely hoped that our Prisoners of War will not be sent to Germany. Joyce had a letter from Dudley posted some time about the end of April or May. The Mayor is arranging for holding a united service in the Town Hall on September 5th in response to the King's wishes.

Ted is back home again. His Mother is distributing the furniture amongst the family. Grace is to have a settee and two easy chairs. Mrs Irons looks to spend some of the summer months at Kroonstad as it is cooler than at the south coast. Poor baby Charles had a nasty accident recently. He was jumping backwards off a barrel and knocked his head on the edge and cut a gash above his eye which had to be stitched up – under chloroform. Hope to hear in this week's letter that he is better.

The Library Committee has been busy revising their rules, this has involved a good deal of typing, which Dorothy Murray has been doing as I did not feel sufficiently competent to do. Of course the Library will pay her for it. It has necessitated a few special meetings of Committee to revise them. Monday and Tuesday (today) have been Council committee days. On September 6th there will be a Council election for three members, all the retiring ones are standing again. I understand there will be a contest. I shall be the Returning Officer which will mean sitting in the Council chamber from 8 a.m. to nine or ten at night.

Rev and Mrs Briggs returned from Synod, held this year at Grahamstown, both very ill with bad colds. He was not able to fulfil his engagements on Sunday but is getting better. Mrs Briggs is still laid up. Fortunately Rev Sorrie took the evening service and I was down for the morning. So next month we are to put our clocks back an hour as last year. I suppose we shall get used to it. I notice that it is light enough now to get up without putting on the light at 6.30.

We went to see Uncle Walter on Sunday afternoon and Olive motored me to see Aunt Eliza afterwards. May Saunders was at Olive's and had given Uncle a wash and left him in bed. He seemed bright but was coughing more than usual I thought. This evening I phoned (Tuesday) to hear how he was and Olive said the Doctor had seen him this afternoon and gave a bad report on his heart and said "anything might happen" and she had better let the family know. His legs have been swelling lately. So we must be prepared for eventualities. We have of course offered to put any of them up if necessary. Mom went to see Aunt Eliza this afternoon and Joyce was down here as well. Joyce's cold is better than it was.

Aunt Emmie has had trouble with the lady who had a room in her cottage and she asked her to leave at once, which she did. The same afternoon, Rev and Mrs Wesley Allan, whom we met at East London, called to enquire if she had a room to let for an elderly lady. So it happened that Auntie got fixed up with a new tenant without any loss. Let us hope the arrangement will be satisfactory.

Wednesday morning. I find that I am not quite correct in the details about the above but in substance it is correct. I phoned to Olive this morning and she say her Father is about the same, up as usual. She has a bilious attack and consequently is feeling rotten.

My benevolent friend from up country has given me more money to distribute for him so have just been to an old man of 90 who was the Municipal street lamp lighter in my young days.

He gets a pension of £2 a month from the Municipality and is living at one of the new Municipal houses in the new suburb called after the Mayor, Culdene. This makes between £40 and £50 I have distributed for him recently and so far all done anonymously. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be entrusted with such missions of good service.

It is dinner time and no post has come to hand so far. Suppose trains are late again. It makes it very awkward as it gives no time to refer to or answer the same day as they arrive, as I like to do. We do appreciate all your letters and realise that sometimes it may be difficult to find the time to write at all. Postcards are very convenient for busy people, I used quite a number in the course of a month. Have to attend a Library Committee at four so will close for this week, hoping you are all well.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday August 25th, 1934

My dear All,

I think all over the Union most exceptional weather conditions have prevailed. For two days we experienced warm weather and I discarded my cardigan and we did without fires in the evenings. The maximum temperature went up to 80 and the minimum dropped to 48. Two days later the maximum was 45 and the minimum 35. Some days we have been glad to have the fire going in the afternoon. With all these changes, we have been able to keep well, for which we are very thankful. There is a good deal of sickness about.

Uncle Walter keeps about the same. I saw him on Sunday afternoon. His breathing is very short and he showed me his left arm which is very swollen and discoloured down to the elbow. He is as independent as ever and will not let anyone help to rise from his chair or bed. He uses two walking sticks and will never have a rug or overcoat to protect him from the weather. The relations have been warned of his condition. Olive is still far from well but keeps on keeping on.

It was a year ago on Monday that Mr Metcalf passed away. He is still greatly missed by all. Miss Metcalf is having some people to occupy part of the house. She must find it very lonely in that big house alone.

Rev Briggs was able to take the Sunday evening service and should have gone to Dagga Boer for the morning but they phoned in from there saying so many were away that it was not necessary for him to go. Both he and Mrs Briggs have been laid up with flu last week. I have been asked to take over the Treasurership of the church again and find there is a good deal of straightening out to do. I had the job years ago.

Our Jacaranda over the two arches in front of the house are a grand sight now that they are in full flower. I went to inspect, with other Councillors, a brick making machine we have recently bought. We require two million bricks for another batch of sub-economic houses we are building for the poorer section of the population. We cannot get local labour for the work in sufficient quantity and this machine will turn out good bricks at the rate of two thousand per hour.

The wire from our broadcasting mast broke in a recent storm but we are getting reception without it – even overseas messages we get. Nevertheless I am having it repaired. The war news is satisfactory so far as the Allies are concerned but it does seem to be taking a terrible time to bring it to an end. Some relatives of Prisoners of War have recently received letters from their boys dated as late as June. It is to be sincerely hoped that they will not be removed to Germany.

“News from Various Quarters”. Someone asked about Douglas’ eyes. He told us that there was still a fault – slightly crossed – and might have to have another op to put them right. Aunt Emmie was going to her specialist to see if hers were alright. I hope so. Reg is building new quarters for his servants. He is a man of many parts and qualifications. Aunt Letty will be 87 on Sunday 29th. Have written to her. Dot says they have three bicycles but only one is in use owing to tyre and tube shortages. I fancy Grace is about in the same position. Reg is also the barber to the family. He reminds me of the story of Uncle Herbert who was told that a certain lady cut her husband’s hair, he remarked “it was rude and wicked” of her. Mrs Legg’s mother has recently passed her 93rd birthday and is still going strong. It is wonderful how these old young people do manage to keep going. Dot’s canaries are laying she says. Perhaps she could bring a hen bird with her as Joyce lost her only one recently. Mr Thomas was very fond of the pair he had and used to let them out of their cage onto the kitchen table and fly about in the room. The hen bird was apparently blind but he would encourage it to fly by throwing it up. This he did once too often and the poor little thing fell into the rat trap and was killed.

Grace in her last letter suggested that if and when Dot came to visit us (which we are looking forward to) that she should join the same train and so have the pleasure of seeing her and us at the same time as Dot probably would not find time to break her journey at Kroonstad as well. It sounds a very good plan and we should welcome it. Ted says he has had a month’s holiday and Grace should have one as well. I wonder if Dot would bring Anthony with her. Grace would of course bring baby Charles.

Evelyn says Mike Meyer has been called up again but she hopes he will be discharged. Rex and Cecily are well and are looking forward to the school holidays at the end of September. The three bulls Douglas bought from Uncle Norman have arrived and seem quite at home on the bottom farm. Mary says they have had strong winds lately but spring time is showing up already. Alison is going for a month's holidays to Cape Town in September and Dorothy Murray will be going to her husband who has a permanent place to go to in October. It is some big irrigation scheme he will be in charge of near Pienaars River, Northern Transvaal. We do not know if Denis has gone north yet.. He was at Maritzburg when we last heard. Joe writes that his transfer to Mafikeng or East London is off. He has been acting charge-man for the past six months but expects to go back to the forge soon. No doubt he will get his well deserved promotion one of these days. Ted is due to go on pension in nine years time. Sorry Joe is having trouble with the car battery. These seem to be unprocurable owing to the war. Their landlord has put a new geyser in the bathroom for them. Joe has had to fix it up. Trevor goes to Sunday School with the others but does not always approve. He does not like having to close his eyes during prayer. Joe was very sorry to have missed seeing Douglas and Evelyn at the Cavalcade in Port Elizabeth. He has been off overtime for six weeks but they are starting again soon. I attended a meeting of the Ratepayers Association on Monday night and they have decided to contest the coming Election. They are all "O.Bs". My time to retire will be next year but I may do so before if politics are to be brought into Municipal matters. We shall see.

Wednesday morning. So far did I get yesterday. Whilst at Council meeting, Aunt Jessie phoned to Mom that she hears that Florrie Biggs is down with rheumatic fever. I can sympathise with her as I have suffered from the same awful complaint. Aunt Jessie also said that "Boy" Vorster, who is building a new house on his farm –presumably a portion of Brooklyn, Graaff Reinet – had the misfortune to have the roof blown off in a recent storm. Another item of news was that Uncle Gervase was ill. He returned from Synod with a bad cold and the changeable weather we have been experiencing lately may have made it worse. We also hear that Roslin, Derick Collett's wife, has a job in Durban at £400 a year. May and Iris had morning tea with us yesterday. They spent the night in town as the car needed overhauling. They have kindly suggested coming in for us when the weather is warmer and taking us out for a weekend. It is some years since we were at Spielmanskop.

Letter from Grace just to hand, suppose we shall hear from Dot tomorrow. Grace wants to know what we have decided to do, suggest if we return with Dot, she need not come but says Dot has suggested that she – Grace –comes a week before Dot as she must be back by the 30th but does not say what month. Of course I should very much like to visit all the homes again but not in the winter or extreme heat of summer. In any case, we hope both will come to us first. Grace says they have bought the house and ground in front of their plot. The house is not completed and they will have difficulty in getting building material but are hopeful. Five morgen of ground goes with the house so they will be able to plough and grow feed for their cows and poultry etc. They have had applicants wanting to hire the house. Water is the big trouble and she says they will have to bore again. It is to be hoped they will be successful this time. Grace is looking rather far ahead as she says when all her big children have left home, then Ted, baby Charles and her can live in the new house – which is smaller – and let the big house.

I intend enclosing with my weekly letter a slip with a printed Blessing on it. I have had these for some years and I hope they will be helpful. I shall just pick them at random. I have a box full of them. I hope they will be as seeds and that they will fall in good ground.

We had a nice letter from Lynne a few days ago. She seems to like her new job. Evelyn also wrote. She finds it very lonely with no children at home.

I hope I have not wearied you with an extra long letter this week but there seemed to be more than usual to write about. The last Council meeting for this Municipal year last night went off very nicely. It was a case of saying "so long" to the three retiring Councillors but I expect they will be returned again. Much love and hoping all the various circles are well.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 29th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Saturday afternoon and we are at Saltpansdrift, Fish River. It is bitterly cold and showers of rain are falling. The fact of the matter is that for some time I have felt that another little change would not do me any harm! I have felt rather run down lately and as Rev Briggs was coming out to take service here tomorrow, I made bold to ask him if he could give us a lift. I never like asking but he was quite nice about it. So we came out with him and Mrs Briggs about eleven this morning. They are staying at Uncle Jack's and doing some visiting as well. They come here to dinner tomorrow and go on to Baroda after and hold service there and into town for the evening service. We will stay here for a couple of days and go back by train either on Tuesday or Wednesday. So that explains why I am starting my letter so early. It was such a nice bright frosty morning when I rose that I thought we were going to have a nice day but it turned cold and showery as we came along. Mom is sitting by the fire looking at some of Uncle Herbert's illustrated farming books. Aunt Jessie is trying over the hymns for tomorrow's service. She still plays the organ – which by the way, she gave to the church. A silver tablet has been placed on the organ recording the fact that she has played it for over fifty years. I am sitting at the corner of the big table in the equally large dining room. Everything about the house is much the same as when Uncle Herbert was alive. The same remark also applies to Grass Ridge.

Our letter from Dot this week was very late this week. It was posted on Monday (unstamped) and we had the usual slip from the Post Office that we must call at the office for it. On the back of the slip – which is evidently used for parcels as well as letters, it is stated "if the contents is not wanted, mark across the docket "refused". Mom thought there was a parcel for us and wondered whatever was coming. Needless to say the letter was very welcome.

Uncle Walter remains about the same, except he is getting weaker and cannot help himself as much as usual. He had another fall in his room the night before last and Olive had to get the assistance of a neighbour to lift him back to bed. Alison goes to Cape Town by train on Tuesday morning. We hear that Christine has become engaged at Cape Town but have not heard to whom.

Blodwen writes that Roy and Merle will sit for their music exams in October. Their teacher expects great things from them. Both of them are very musical and no doubt will do well. I am missing my wireless here. Petrol is short and batteries are unobtainable.

We phoned this evening to Aunt Letty and Deneys answered. He said his Grandmother was well and his mother was better and about again. There had not been any more roofs blown off. They had recently had a number of letters from John and he was well. Of course we all sent greetings to Letty. Uncle Norman and Jack have had news of their boys who are Prisoners of War. They all seem well and are working. This Sunday morning there was a sharp frost (they have not a thermometer out here but it was bitterly cold). Then there was a heavy mist and even when we went to service it was too cold for anything. I had a rug over my knees during the service. Everyone says they have never had it so cold as this winter has been. Ten of us sat down to dinner here – which was much enjoyed. The usual plum pudding as usual. There were only about a dozen at service which shows how cold it was and of course quite a number were away on account of colds etc. Mr and Mrs Briggs, Dudley and Katie, Norman and Gladys and Aunt Jessie and Mr Barnes and ourselves constituted the gathering. After dinner we enjoyed sitting in the sun out of the wind against the stable wall. The Briggs left shortly after dinner for service at Barods and Mr Barnes took us all up to see a new piece of work the neighbour on the other side of the river is constructing - a flume to convey the water from Grass Ridge to water the lands over that side. From what we could see, it does not appear that it will be a success. Then we went to see Aunt Agnes and found Harvey and Winnie and family there, also Gladys and Enid. Uncle Jack may be going to town on Tuesday or Wednesday so we hope to go back with him. Agnes complains that her reading glasses are no good to her but the distance ones are very good. I have suggested that she sends them back and let Dr Stewart test them and see if they are wrong or she did not answer correctly when he tested her.

Monday morning. We were glad to sit round a nice large wood fire during the evening reading and Aunt Jessie played some hymns. We have had a much better night's sleep than Saturday and I am glad to say it does not seem quite so cold as yesterday, for which I am very thankful. How I do miss my wireless, no news since Saturday morning when we left town except that we hear King Boris is dead. I wonder if he has been "liquidated" by Hitler. I think I shall take a walk over to Gervase's. They have all been sick there. I can get the post at the same time. I did not leave word for our post to be sent out as we did not know how long we should be away. I see I have made many mistakes in not moving the paper on and so have typed over the same line twice. Needless to say I am typing under difficulties. You must please excuse all mistakes.

Eight a.m. must stop for breakfast. It is cloudy but not quite so cold but it is early to say what the day will be like.

Monday evening. The day has not been quite as bad as yesterday but still quite cold enough. After breakfast I walked over to see Gervase and Rouena. The wind was blowing quite strongly from behind me so I did not feel it too much. Rouena was sitting on the stoep writing to her three girls. She uses carbon and so gets through in one operation. Her cold was somewhat better. Barbara was to be transferred to Durban and was looking forward to be with Roslin. She is nursing now but if she wants to go back to teaching after the war, she will be able to do so. Roslin has a good position in Durban in social welfare work. Pam is still in Johannesburg I think. She has a number of letters and cards from her young man who is a Prisoner of War in Italy. Gervase soon returned from taking Hope to school and after morning tea, brought me back here. He had business to talk over with Mr Barnes. We did not leave instructions for our post to be sent out but the Midland and Herald arrived for Aunt Jessie and Mr Barnes so I have not been entirely cut off from the outside world. This afternoon I walked to the station and back. My it was cold but I was quite warm when I got back. It took me exactly 25 minutes to walk back. We are now sitting round the fire except myself who is sitting at the big table.

Dot's last week's letter was two days late in arrival but contained good news as usual. They were all interested in the eclipse which was seen to advantage. The children had to write an essay on it the next day at school. She does not give any indication as to when she is likely to come down, I hope it will not be as cold as it is at present when she does travel. I don't know when I have felt the cold as I have this winter, especially the last few days. Her boys have been busy making a telephone out of two ox bladders and Dot has the delightful(?) job of sewing them up. I think I can give them a simpler way than that. Alan is teaching her Afrikaans! She says she is slow at learning.

Blodwen writes that both the Mafikeng and East London transfers are off and they are disappointed. Hope something better may be in store for them. He has had six months relief from forge work. He has served 20 years on the Railway and is now entitled to free 1st class travel on the trains. Her brother, Mr Merrifield, who is an architect, may be going to America on behalf of the Government and expects to fly if he does go. Roy and Merle are to sit for their first music exam shortly. The examiner is coming from England. Their teacher expects good results as both are very musical.

Lynne is helping at the YMCA camp with one of the Collen girls in the evenings once or twice a week and is, of course, interested in the work. She likes her new job.

Mrs Chatterton, Ted's Aunt, has decided to take the room the Armstrongs had from October 1st. We see a good deal of her as she likes to come and listen in to the news. We have Rev and Mrs Sorrie and Mr and Mrs Campbell – retired Postmaster – to afternoon tea last Wednesday and enjoyed their company. Mrs Herbert Tilbrook sent me a copy of the Umtali paper giving an account of her husband's death. Of course we knew him when in business at Vryburg. Mrs Tilbrook was Matron of the Vryburg Hospital and when the children were young, I used to take them for a walk on Sunday afternoons to see her and she always gave them tea at a small table in her sitting room. I wonder what she will do now.

Tuesday morning. Another cold day. I intended walking up to the station to see Alison as she passed through to Cape Town on holiday but it clashed with breakfast time so did not go. Since then it has started to rain but so far it has not amounted to much. Grass Ridge dam is opened and a

lot of water is passing here. It is a raw morning and am sitting in my overcoat and a nice fire is burning in the dining room. I have been sleeping each night in my cardigan and scarf and plenty of blankets and have not felt too hot. Fortunately we brought our hot water bottles. We see by the Midland News of Saturday that Christine is engaged to Rex Moys. She finished her nursing course next February. I wonder if Rex has given up the idea of becoming a Methodist Minister. He was very keen on it some time ago.

I shall finish my letter today and post it here as I am pretty sure I shall not have time after we get home to add to it. Not that there is much to add. It has been a quiet restful change but oh so cold. It does seem strange without the wireless or post but it has been an agreeable rest and change. It is nearly dinner time and Jack has not phoned to let us know if he is taking us to town in the morning, if he does not, we shall go in by train which passes here about 8.30 in the morning. I intend walking up to the station to post this before five p.m. I hope there will be a nice post in our letter box when we arrive. There has been a fire going all day today and yet it is cold. I wish I had brought my heavy overcoat instead of the rainproof one.

Rouena tells me that Ursula Collett has let her farm at Humansdorp for a couple of years and she is going to make her headquarters at Myra Collett's at Middelburg and will visit about amongst her relations for a time. Her son, who suffers so badly from asthma, is to travel about until he can find a district where he can live. He tried Middelburg – his old home district – and found that an old shin trouble was worse than the asthma. No more now lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 8th, 1943

My dear All,

We have been back just over a week and so far, we have not had a fire. We have had cloudy days but no rain. Let me correct an error I made in a recent letter. I said the Jacaranda was in flower over the arch, of course I should have said the Jasmine. My statement re the brick machine turning out 2000 bricks per hour has been challenged. That is its capacity and up to now, it is producing 1200 to 1250 per hour and when the men get more used to it, no doubt it will come up to its capacity.

Uncle Walter keeps about the same. His last fall, Doctor thinks, he either cracked or broke a rib. He finds he cannot sleep on his back. He is very restless, sleeps a good deal but needs constant attention. Unfortunately Olive developed flu on Friday. Doctor ordered her to bed. Aunt Jessie, Gladys and Katie came in for the United service in the Town Hall and afterwards went to see Walter and Olive. They decided that something must be done. Aunt Katie said she could come in the next day by train if no one else could be obtained. Uncle refuses to go to hospital. However Iris has come to the rescue for the present. Olive is up and about but ought not to be. She says she cannot rest in bed. Alex' wife, Gladys, stayed with her over Sunday. Now that they have the phone, we frequently ring up to find out how they are getting on.

Well the news so far as Grace and Dot are concerned is that they look to arrive on the morning of the 16th. We hope that the Railway will not step in and refuse to issue their tickets. Ted has bought his brother's motorbike and expects to get a sidecar as well. I guess the big boys will soon take to it. Joy has been asking enquiries about Kingswood School for Roy. He seems rather young to leave home. I went to boarding school a few days before I was nine but in South Africa they do not go so early. It is certainly a good school.

Aunt Jessie does not trouble about early coffee and we have not resumed having any refreshment during the night or early morning since our return and I do not think we are any the worse for doing without. I am sorry to see by the Stellander that Mr J.F. Casewell, an old friend of mine, has passed away at Vryburg. It is also sad to hear that his brother, who is the Managing Director of Brown Rayner & Co, has been in hospital for some time. Talking of businessmen, a great surprise was sprung upon the town last week when it became known that the oldest business house had changed hands. T.J. Roberts & Sons has done a good business for over 60 years here and has now sold out their entire stock to the Handel's Maaschappay, the biggest competitor in town. I remember when the firm was building its present shops, Mr Roberts saying that he did not expect it would last more than six months. It has and now has bought all Roberts stock. We also learn that Garlicks of Cape Town have bought the Roberts premises and are going to rebuild after the war and start a branch here. I guess they will shake other business houses up a good deal.

Our Municipal election is now a thing of the past. It took place yesterday (Monday) and caused a good deal of interest. It was the biggest poll Cradock has ever had. Exactly 899 votes were recorded. I was at the polling booth from 7.30 a.m. till 10.15 p.m. without any break for any meals. I took the sandwich tin out of the picnic suitcase that was presented to us at the East London holiday by members of the family and we had cups of tea handed round during the proceedings. Everything passed off without any trouble. When the counting of the votes took place, some objection was lodged against my ruling regarding some of the spoilt papers but was afterwards withdrawn. Unfortunately the contest was on party lines. The Nationalists tried to oust three sitting members. They did not succeed. They all thanked me for the way the proceedings were conducted. Needless to say I was very tired by the time it was over – or rather before it was over so did not stop to listen to all the speeches after I had declared the result. I was sorry that Mom had such a quiet uninteresting day all alone at home except a walk to see how Uncle was and she came up and recorded her vote. Aunt Eliza also came down in her wheeled chair and voted.

On Thursday we are having a special meeting to elect a Mayor and Deputy for the ensuing year. Our youngest Councillor has been to some of the others asking to be elected Mayor. I don't think they will agree to it.

Wednesday morning. I hope the post won't be very late as we are naturally anxious to hear if Grace and Dot are really coming next week. We have not made up our minds if we will return with Dot. Grace wants to be back by the end of September as he has a large batch of chicks from an incubator due about then. Dot reckons she can spend a month with us and suggests we break the journey at Kroonstad and then go on to her and return via Vryburg. We will talk it over when they come.

Uncle Walter has had a restless night but Olive is about again but should be in bed.

Joyce has let us see eight of Dudley's letter and cards received recently. All interesting. Evidently they are expecting release soon. Says conditions have improved. Is so thankful for Red Cross parcels. Does not know what they would do without them.

Letter from Grace says she arrives next Wednesday. Joe says he will try to run up for a weekend whilst they are here. No letter from Dot yet.

Later. Letter from Dot just as we were going to dinner. She is coming by the same train as Grace so they both will arrive next Wednesday morning. Good news.

Love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday September 15th, 1943

My dear All,

Uncle Walter still keeps about the same and has been confined to his bed for about a fortnight now except that he occasionally gets out without leave. He fell three times in one day through this. Mildred and Iris are now with him. Iris takes the night duty. We phone up daily and go up often. He is very patient and often we think he is sleeping as he lies with his eyes closed. Dr sees him frequently. On Sunday he seemed to me to be much weaker.

Last week we heard of the passing away of Rev Oliver at Somerset West and on Saturday evening, our M.O.H. and District Surgeon did here whilst he was on leave. I have sent a postcard to David Biggs, who is now a qualified doctor, as he might be interested in the appointment.

Mr Dodd was in the Library recently and reported that he had been laid up for some weeks and Mrs Dodd was in to see a doctor about her legs.

We are still expecting Grace and Dot at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday so hope to be able to report their safe arrival. As I write this, I expect Dot has arrived at Johannesburg station, 7.30 a.m.

Evelyn writes that Mrs Hudson and Trixie have arrived at Vryburg so Dot will have just missed them. Grace is bringing Charles but Dot is not bringing her adopted Anthony. Joe says he would like to come up for the long weekend if his substitute arrives before then. If this happens, I hope Grace will arrange for her batch of chickens to delay their arrival so that she can stay at least over the October 4th holiday. By the way, it is Aunt Eliza's 84th anniversary on 18th and Joe will be 42 on Sunday next.

I happened to listen in about 7 p.m. last Wednesday (8th) when the joyful news of Italy's unconditional surrender was announced. I phoned the good news to one and another, including Uncle Norman who had already heard it. Later I went up to tell Joyce but an opposite neighbour had already told her. What a joy it will be to so many families in the Midlands when the boys return. Denis is still in the Union and is itching to get away. Have asked Ruth for any information. Dorothea has been up to see him again in Maritzburg and is now back at the University. It would be nice if we could have her here whilst Grace and Dot are with us. Should like all to meet her.

Dot and Reg went to a War Fund dance recently and the Boy Scouts were also wanted to help so all the family went, their first experience. I had a letter from one of my Louis Botha House boys who is down on leave and has got married. Joe will remember him, Ben Theron. He was a very nice young man and I often send him some literature. Douglas has been busy planting early mealies. They have had good rains but it soon gets dry again. They have had lots of wind up there too.

Mr Collen is much better but is not able to do much work. He has a white foreman to assist. Mike Meyer has at last got his discharge. We also hear that Graham Armstrong has his but we have not had a letter from them for a long time.

I am trying to see if the Sons of England can assist with a bursary for David. He wants to be a teacher. Harold is sitting for the Civil Service exam, so is David – Harold wants to enter the engineering department of the Post Office if he passes his exam. It sounds quite a good line.

Later. Letter from Harold has just come and Grace adds a line that all is set fair for leaving today (Tuesday). Harold regrets that he had not taken up music in some form or other but may do so when he goes out to work. Mildred has just phoned saying the Cyril has a cable message dated September 1st from his son Ralph reporting all well and they had been shifted from Camp 85 further north. No parcels from home had reached him. I hope Joyce has had similar news.

Lily Trollip, Uncle Dan's daughter, with whom Mom stayed with when we went to the Mayoral Congress at Aliwal North about four or five years ago, died in East London last Saturday from heart trouble. She was Aunt Charlotte's favourite niece and her passing will affect Aunt's Will as she had remembered her. Something more for me to see to. It was strange that the day before she passed away, I said to Aunt Charlotte what would she do if Lily passed out before she did. The next afternoon, the wire came announcing her death.

Tuesday evening. I have just referred to the timetable and see to my satisfaction that Grace and Dot should just be meeting at Kroonstad Station (8.25) and I hope they are together in the same

compartment. If the train is up to time, they should be here by 9.33 in the morning. Will keep the letter open for any late news.

Wednesday morning. The train was a little late and I met them before nine. They had had a compartment to themselves all the way and were really quite comfortable. Both report all well at their respective homes. It is cold again this morning but not bad enough for an overcoat. I don't think you will expect me to fill the sheet this week, having such distinguished guests. At the moment they are busy unpacking their goods and chattels. Baby Charles is watching me typing and seems interested. Grace and Dot met at Kroonstad and had the compartment to themselves all the way. Well, goodbye for this week. Hope all the various homes are well and that we shall have good news during the day.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
September 22nd, 1943

My dear All,

It is early Tuesday morning. Owing to the change of time, which took effect from Sunday morning, it is dark first thing. Personally I do not see any advantage in the changeover. The daylight saving could be effected by simply changing the hours of work without all this upsetting of clocks etc. I understand that farmers especially find the present arrangement most upsetting to their servants who work from sun up to sunset. Next year I don't think the government will be making the change.

Well we have had the pleasure of practically a week's company of Grace and Dot. The time has gone all too quickly. They have booked their seats for their return. Grace will leave on her birthday, October 2nd, by the night train arriving home about dinner time on Sunday. Dot has booked for the morning train on October 18th. Nothing has been arranged about our going and I don't suppose we shall. The Railway administration is doing all in its power to dissuade unnecessary travel.

On Saturday afternoon, Rev and Mrs Briggs called to see us and the girls. We told them we were going up to wish Aunt Eliza many happy returns of her 84th birthday. They said they would like to do the same as they did not know it was her birthday. So Mr Briggs went and got his car and we all went together and took her by storm. We had a very nice afternoon. We took her some flowers in a basket and some fruit etc. Joyce and I joined in giving her a pair of sheepskin hand-made slippers which will keep her feet nice and warm in the winter. We were greatly amused at Mr Briggs kissing her before he left. This is the third or fourth Minister "who has embraced the opportunity". Aunt Eliza read us an extract from the Friend on the experience of a Quakeress in England who had been sent to prison as a conscientious objector, which was very interesting. Of course we were all regaled with tea, cake etc in lavish style. Am glad to say Aunt Eliza seems in wonderfully good health and hope she may so continue. Mr and Mrs Briggs kindly offered to take Grace and Dot with them to Fish River and Baroda the following day where he was holding services. They were pleased to accept and so had the pleasure of seeing quite a number of Uncles and Aunts and other relations whom they might not have seen otherwise. Of course baby Charles went with them.

Sunday evening was a special service for Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. The church was well filled. We called in at the Polers after service and saw Ernest and Dorothy Murray for a while. Alison is still at Cape Town having a good time and a rest as well. Have I told you that Christine is engaged to Rex Moys? She expects to complete her nursing training about the end of the year. He is on active service at present.

Since I last wrote, we have heard of the death of old Mr Florence at Cape Town – Una's father and also Rev Oliver at Somerset West. Mr Oliver was minister at Vryburg. Una says her husband is still working at the YMCA "up north". She is anxious for him to come back. We had a nice letter from Denis, he is still in Maritzburg waiting to go northwards. He has been to see Muriel. So has Jeffrey. We hope to hear how Joe spent his birthday on Sunday. We hope he may come up for a weekend whilst Gay and Dot are here.

Wednesday morning 22nd. The weather the last few days has been all that one could desire. Not too hot and not too cold, unfortunately no rain. The garden and veldt is dry. We all went to the top of Ouberg yesterday afternoon by taxi and enjoyed the view and were able to see something of the development of the town. We got out at the new culvert and saw the causeway the railway is constructing. It will be another month or two before they have finished it. Monday and Tuesday were my Council committee days but Mom and the girls paid a call on Mrs Davis and I picked them up after five p.m. Baby Charles is very good and gives us a lot of fun. Mrs Booth's granddaughter comes and plays with him.

Olive has got a nurse from Port Elizabeth for Uncle who is now more or less kept to his bed. Mildred has gone home and May Saunders has been helping whilst waiting for a case. In a recent letter from Denis, he asks me to send his greetings to all members of the clan. He is tired of waiting

for the move northwards. Ruth and husband are to spend a couple of weeks at East London from October 1st. Hope they have fine weather.

Mrs Chatterton, Grace's Aunt, is leaving for Walmer on Thursday morning and will stay with her daughter for a while. I expect she will return here as her doctor in Port Elizabeth says she cannot live there. Rev Sorrie may also be leaving as he is expecting to receive a "call" to another church, possibly in Natal.

We do not expect letters today as the girls are here and of course they get the letters. They are busy in various ways in the house. This morning they are using the electric cleaner on the lounge furniture. The effect appears satisfactory.

No word yet if Joe or Lynne will be coming over for the long weekend.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
September 29th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Tuesday morning and we have the pleasure of having Grace, Joe and Dot with us. Joe arrived with Roy about seven yesterday morning. Grace, Charles and I met them. They had had a cold journey and it remained cold most of the day so much so, that we enjoyed a fire all the evening.

We have had funny weather for a week or more – very cold at times and dull days but no rain until last night or rather this morning early when 33 points fell which are very welcome as all the trees and plants are now bursting into leaf.

Lynne phoned from Queenstown recently saying she had not been able to find any opportunity of getting a lift by car – of course the petrol rationing makes it very difficult for anyone to travel by car. However we are still hoping she may turn up. Roy has grown a good deal since we last saw him and is getting on quite nicely at school. Joe has brought his lantern and films and is going to give us a show one evening. I have to attend Council meeting tonight so we shall not have then. He spent the morning at Aunt Eliza with Alan, Gladys' son, and Raymond.

We all are having dinner each day at the Premier as it saves the trouble of cooking every day. One afternoon last week, we hired a taxi and all went up Oukop. Joe is going up there again. Later. Joe would like to go to Buffels Hoek and see Olive Schreiner's tomb on top of the mountain but it is some climb and time will not permit. All three – Joe, Grace and Dot, have been busy with the vacuum cleaner and done all the walls and had the pictures down and given a regular spring cleaning. This week we have our midi-day meals each day at the Premier.

It is now Thursday evening and my letter is not finished and I doubt if I can manage it tonight. Let me retrace my steps a bit. Our electric stove has been giving trouble. It was recently overhauled and the mechanic placed strips of wood under the feet to keep them off the metal top of the table. The heat had evidently scorched these pieces of wood and somehow caused a short circuit. No fire ensued but it put the stove out of commission for sometime so we have not attempted to do any cooking for dinners. Everything is alright now but we shall continue our dinners there for the present.

Grace will be leaving on Saturday night and is due home on Sunday. Spring cleaning with the vacuum cleaner has been going for some while and the operation has been successful. Neither of the girls have used a vacuum cleaner before. Joe was very helpful in getting down the pictures from the walls etc. The weather has been most changeable – we have had fires again in the afternoons as well as the evenings.

Uncle Walter keeps about the same. He has a trained nurse from Port Elizabeth and Mildred has come in to relieve Olive who has had to go to see the specialist again in Port Elizabeth. Iris is also helping there and May Saunders is waiting on another case so will not be able to help much longer. Joe, Dot, Joyce, Alan and the smaller ones walked over the river this afternoon and climbed Oukop. Grace and Charles stayed with us. Wednesday afternoon we all went to see the American Charley's Aunt at the bio. In the evening, Joe gave us an exhibition of some of his cine films, which as usual were very interesting.

On Tuesday, Joe went with me to be overhauled by Dr Scholtz. He says my heart is keeping fairly good and thinks it would not do me any harm if I wanted to take a round up country. I could of course come back if I found it too high. I do not think we shall entertain any move at present for various reasons. For some time past, I have been suspicious that there was something else wrong and Dr discovered there is a slight rupture but nothing very serious. I am glad it is nothing worse.

Well it is getting late so I must close with apologies for being so late and uninteresting. We are sending Douglas a wire in the morning for his birthday on Monday. Joe leaves on Sunday night so we shall be almost lost with four leaving us within 24 hours.

Goodnight everybody,
Lots of love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
October 6th, 1943

My dear All,

It is 7.30 Tuesday a.m. and news came through from College Road at 6.55 that Uncle Walter passed away at quarter past midnight. I have been phoning to some of the relations but the day and time of the funeral has not yet been fixed, probably tomorrow. Later. The funeral is to be at 3 on Wednesday afternoon. I have been busy on the phone and helping where I can. Rev Briggs is away so I have arranged with Rev Sorrie to conduct the service if Mr Briggs is not back in time. I expect there will be a large attendance of relations and friends. Have phoned to Graaff Reinet, Aunt Rosa and many others. Today (Tuesday) is also our Hospital Fete Day as well as Stock Fair Day and the reopening of the schools so altogether there is much to be done. Dot and I went to the opening of the Fete and we three went to lunch in the Town Hall. This was in the way of a novelty as each luncheon was supplied with their lunch on a piece of greaseproof paper as they entered and ate the bountiful supply of food without the aid of plates or cutlery. This reminded Mom and I of the function we went to when attending the Mayoral Congress at Aliwal North some years ago.

You will be sorry to hear that Olive had to go to see the specialist last week in Port Elizabeth. They did not tell Uncle Walter as he has always been so anxious to know where she was. So after all the years she has had as almost the sole care of her father, she is not with him at the end. She is expected back in a few days time. Mildred, Iris and May Saunders and a nurse from Port Elizabeth have been in charge. A piece of bone from the upper part of Olive's nose has had to be removed. Then, too, Aunt Eliza had to call in the doctor as she was suffering from what at first was thought might be mumps but doctor says it was an abscess forming in her neck. He ordered her to stay in bed and we are glad to say the trouble has yielded to treatment. It was very sore at the time and interfered with her powers of speech and also her eating. I must retrace my steps and try to go over some of the happenings of the time whilst Grace and Joe have been with us. Dot is still here. Joe gave a show of his pictures one evening and we had Miss Booth and little Ann, also Joyce and Raymond and Alan. We were sorry that Aunt Eliza did not come as well but she has not been out in the evenings for a very long while. I doubt if ever since Joe gave a show before. We all went to the pictures one afternoon to see the American Charlie's Aunt. It was very funny and perhaps the laugh did us good. We all attended church and greatly enjoyed Rev Sorrie's addresses. Grace left on the evening of her birthday (Saturday) and arrived safely about dinnertime on Sunday. She phoned about five thirty, just as we were going out of the door to see Joe and Roy off to Port Elizabeth. Naturally she had a warm welcome and announced that during her visit here, she had been presented with 64 chickens, four kittens and a heifer calf. Not at all a bad record. Dot and Joe saw them off and I think Charles was glad to get home again. He is a very fine little chap, full of life.

The vacuum cleaner has never been used so much before in this house as during their visit. Neither of them have used one before so perhaps that accounts for the enthusiasm. Roy is growing nicely. He is fond of tools etc. He is doing well at music. He missed the pianola. He enjoyed playing with Raymond. Wednesday morning early. Rev Briggs returned about five and came along to see us in the evening. He will of course take the funeral service and goes up to see the family in the morning. We rather expected that Aunt Rosa would arrive by the evening train so I waited up till past ten and no one came. However after eleven, Cousin Harry Collett knocked at the door so I got up and made him coffee whilst Dot made a bed for him in the work room. He said Uncle Owen got out of the same train at Fish River so it looks as though all the brothers at any rate will be here. The sisters will not all be here. I phoned to Aunt Letty but Florrie has not been well.

Douglas has written a long interesting letter. He got the bull at Bloemfontein he inspected at Fish River. Arthur and Rex had three days together at Alexandria. I guess they did talk. Trixie and her babies have returned to Johannesburg as they had not been well at Madrid Farm. Kingsley has grown, is now 5 ft 7½ and is still ploughing and planting. I shall not be able to add more as the funeral is only at three this afternoon. Aunt Eliza is much better. We are glad to have Dot's help and company and shall be very sorry when the time comes for her to leave. Am sorry she is not sleeping too well here. She gets good news from home. Lots of love to each and all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock

as Wednesday October 13th, 1943

My dear All,

It is past three on Tuesday afternoon and I don't expect to be able to get very far as I have to attend the quarterly meeting at 7.30. Mom and Dot will stay at the Parsonage while I am at the meeting. I have just returned from the Council Chamber where I was called to extend an official welcome to a Paramount Chief of the Natives residing in this area. He resides near East London. He is grandson of an old Chief of Royal blood. He is an educated man and was attended by nine others of his tribe. I wore the official robes for the occasion. Strange to say, a Chief of his rank never speaks in public so one of his headmen replied on his behalf. He seemed very pleased. Of course the Town Clerk was also present.

You will want to know about Uncle Walter's funeral. All his brothers and sisters, except Aunts Letty and Agnes, were present. Aunt Rosa came down by car as far as Saltpansdrift and slept at Aunt Jessie's. There were mostly relatives who attended but there were a good many in the church. Rev Briggs gave a very fine address – short and to the point. A good many relations came here after the cemetery and had tea. I expect I told you that Olive had gone to hospital at Port Elizabeth and it was just as well, as she is still far from well. However, she came up on Sunday morning, which she should not have done, and Doctor told her to go straight back on Monday morning. I saw her off. Both her sisters have returned to their homes and the house is shut up for the present. It is to be sold soon but we have not heard any particulars as to the terms of his Will. It is to be hoped that Olive is well provided for. We had hoped that Aunt Rosa would spend some time with us before returning to her home but Aunt Jessie phoned this morning saying that Rosa was not well and was returning on Monday morning and would travel with Dot as far as Naauwpoort.

We have had letters from Grace and Joe since their return. The calf was not a heifer as previously reported and will someday be sent to the butchers. We have seen Jean's music report and same seems very good in most respects.

Whilst I think of it, we took advantage of the presence of Grace, Dot and Joe to draw lots for the lunch case you gave us at East London. We have only used it a few times when at Cape Town and are not likely to use it much more so thought it best to let one of the family have it. Mom drew for Douglas and Dot got it and no doubt it will come in very useful as they often go for picnics.

On Monday afternoon, Dot gave an address at the Women's Auxiliary meeting. I should have liked to have been there to have had the pleasure of listening, but I understand it was very interesting.

Wednesday morning. It was very cold again yesterday evening but it did not freeze as it did a few nights ago. Farmers fear that their fruit crop has been spoilt.

The quarterly meeting passed off quietly but Mr Briggs announced that there was a possibility of his being transferred back to his old station at Shawbery as his successor refuses to stay there and the position is very difficult to fill. We all hope that it will not materialise. He has endeared himself very much to all here.

Dorothy Murray has left for her new home which will not be so very far from Potgietersrus. Her husband is to be in charge of a large engineering work that is going on there. We understand that she is seeing a specialist regarding her baby and if nothing can be done for it, she will place it in a "home". Dorothy is wonderfully bright and happy.

Alison has returned from Cape Town and has greatly enjoyed the change. Lynne phones occasionally and writes very brightly. She had a good time over the long weekend. We hope way will open for her to come and see us. We are indebted to Rex for a nice shopping bag for Mom and a copy of the New Testament bound in cedar of Lebanon or Olive wood, I do not know which, but both are very acceptable. I am owing both Arthur and Rex a letter. Am glad to hear that the two boys have at last met and had a few days together.

Let me here apologise to all for apparent neglect in writing lately as fully as I would like. I am sure you will understand that having three out of four of the family with us, it is excusable. Will try to improve after we get back to normal. The Mayor being away has given me some extra duties to perform. In the next day or so some government doctors and other officials are arriving to

discuss our plans for improving our water supply and the installation of the long talked of waterborne sewage scheme, which I hope to live to see installed in the town. Some 40 years ago, an article was written in the Midland News urging the introduction of it so we cannot be accused of undue haste.

We hope Ruth and John have had a good time at East London. We do not know if Denis managed to get another trip down before leaving for the north. We have not heard definitely that he has gone.

Our servant girl was away for a few days owing to sickness but we managed to keep going. She comes to work about 7.30 or 8. The garden boy still comes on Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturday morning but is not very satisfactory. The other days he works for Olive. We are needing rain very badly. Joe reports having had lots in Uitenhage. Mom is entertaining the W.C.T.U. here tomorrow afternoon. Fortunately Dot is here to help her.

Goodbye,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday October 20th, 1943

My dear All,

I know I have been treating all of you rather badly the last few weeks since the family has been so well represented here with us during August and October so you must please excuse me. It has been very nice having so many during that period and hope we shall not have to wait for another two years before we see you all again. We were very glad to have Dot's company or we should have been very lonely after Grace and Charles' departure. She has been kept busy all the time and there can hardly be a corner or cupboard that has not been overhauled. She was invited to give an address to the Women's Auxiliary on Monday afternoon and I hear on all sides that she acquitted herself well. Her talk was much enjoyed and I should have liked to have been there.

Then on our 52nd anniversary, the W.C.T.U. held their monthly meeting here. This was arranged some months ago. Had we thought of it clashing, we might have arranged otherwise. However, about 20 or more ladies turned up and they had a good time. I did not stay but attended a Committee meeting in the Location. Mom could not have managed it alone and I don't think she must attempt such again. Congratulations were conveyed to us. The same morning, the Paramount Chief, with some of his Councillors, called in his car to say farewell. We entertained the six of them with cool drinks on the front stoep. Mom and Dot were busy getting ready for the afternoon function. Rev Calata was with the Chief and in saying farewell, referred to the fact that he was alive through Mary's kindness and attention to him when he was very ill. Mary took him into her home and gave up her bed to him and nursed him to health and strength again. He said he would not have been alive had it not been for her kindness.

On Friday a special meeting of the Council was held in order to meet the Government officials regarding our water-borne sewage scheme which I am pleased to say was unanimously approved of and we now have to go to the Ratepayers for their approval and authority to raise the necessary loan of over £100,000 to pay for it. The Councillors also took the opportunity of offering their congratulations on our anniversary.

The Mayor is likely to be away for three months which will entail some extra work on yours truly. Already I have been asked to entertain two gatherings which are meeting here early next month. The 1820 Memorial Settlers Association is holding a conference here and there is to be a conference in connection with some D.R.C. Missionary Society.

On Friday afternoon we were pleased to have a phone call from Lynne saying she had got a chance of coming over for the weekend the next day. A Mr Webber, nephew of the family who recently lost their brother, was coming over for the weekend the next day. They arrived about 4.30, having done the trip of just over 90 miles in about 2½ hours. A niece of his accompanied them. Lynne is looking the picture of health and was as fresh as anything. As it happened, our maid did not turn up on Sunday but that did not matter. We took Aunt Eliza by surprise on Sunday afternoon. She saw Lynne and I passing her window and when she came into the sitting room, she thought it was Dot at first. Dot came in later. Aunt Eliza is much better than she has been and is still having treatment. Both Lynne and Webber had to be at work by 9 on Monday so they decided to start from here at 5 a.m. when he called for her. Dot set the alarm for 4.30 and I was up in time. They had coffee etc having packed up foodstuff for the road the evening before. We have not heard how they got on but no doubt they arrived on time. Dot was also due to catch the 7.27 train for home the same morning so she had an early breakfast and I saw her off comfortably settled. Aunt Rosa had arranged to travel by the same train, joining it at Fish River as far as Naauwpoort, which she did as we learnt from a postcard received this morning. Lynne brought over photos of Arthur and Rex taken together in Alexandria which are excellent. We have since received a copy of same from Evelyn for which we are grateful.

I have forgotten to thank Douglas and Joe for their wires which came to hand on The Day. Mr Sowden, related to the Prices – sorry Perces – friends of Grace who we knew well at Observatory, sent us a card of remembrance. Mrs Cursons is spending a few months in Cradock.

Mrs Herbert Tilbrook is going to carry on her husband's farming as best she can. Everyone has been very kind to her she says. She sends her greetings to all of you.

We are continuing for the present having our mid-day meal daily at the Premier. Ruth's phone number is Grahamstown 674. Hope they have had a good time at East London. Milner is still stationed at the airport in Grahamstown.

Grace has bought the piano stool which has duly arrived at Kroonstad. Joe helped with the packing. Dot has taken the canvas stretcher bed as it will come in useful for their camping picnics. Am sorry to hear that Ted had a car crash a little while ago on his way out from town. No one was hurt but the car was damaged.

At last I have yielded to persuasion and got a new suit but instead of having to pay about £4/15- for it, it now costs £9. Dot helped with selecting the material and Mom also approved.

I think I have written enough for this week. It is now Tuesday evening and we are just going to listen in to Smuts' speech from the Guildhall. Mom did not hear it this afternoon. Guess Dot is about leaving Johannesburg for home.

Hope to hear good news in the morning from you.

Lots of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
October 27th, 1943

My dear All,

It is now more than a week since the last of our visitors, Dot, left us and we should not mind at all if one or more of the family were with us again. We must not be greedy, the pleasure we have had makes one feel how nice it would be if we did have someone who could be with us or just drop in as occasion offered. However, we find a good deal to interest us – if it were not so, living here would be somewhat monotonous. I have been interested in looking through a big bundle of correspondence which Rev Briggs has handed over thinking there might be some sufficiently interesting to be kept. Most of it related to years as far back as 1913, together with any receipts and accounts of years gone by. These I have destroyed and they go to the anti-waste depot. Some letters related to the invitations to ministers to come to the Circuit whilst many had reference to the untimely death of Rev Lister who contracted typhus fever. The church collected over £150 to pay the cost of medical services and burial costs, including a memorial tablet in the church and headstone in the cemetery. There was a balance over after all these costs had been met of over £50 which was handed over to his widow who afterwards married Harry Trollip.

Conference has decided to transfer Rev Briggs back to his former Circuit so we shall be parting with him early in January. The whole congregation is very sorry to part with him. He would like to remain here but feels it is his duty to go and resume his work amongst the Natives. Rev Karg is coming here from Clumber. He is very highly spoken of and no doubt will be heartily received.

We had a telegram from Uncle Owen on Thursday afternoon last saying he was coming to us that evening. He duly arrived about 10.30 p.m. He is looking for a new home. Leslie has now taken over the whole of the farming at Rooispruit from the end of January next and naturally they do not want to be in his way. They are thinking of going to settle in Port Elizabeth or perhaps here or even in Middelburg. Kate and Beryl joined him here on Saturday morning. Owen attended a number of sales which were advertised for that day but did not fancy any of them. They all went on to Port Elizabeth the same evening and we shall be interested in hearing what prospects they have there. They suggested that if we wanted to go for a six month holiday, they would like to have our house so that they can look about. I don't fancy Uncle Owen living in Port Elizabeth with nothing to do. His health is not too good and he has to rest as much as he can. They are looking to have a family reunion at Redlands for their Golden Wedding Anniversary on January 11th and might stay on as long as Easter. Beryl says it breaks her heart to think of leaving her beautiful home and garden. She consulted with a doctor while here.

It is still Tuesday morning and I am listening to the wireless as I am typing. The lost chord is now on the air and is coming over nicely. It does not interfere with my typing. We had a couple of postcards from Dot en route. Am glad she had such a comfortable journey home and found all well, even if Reg was looking thin. No doubt he will soon fill out again after a few days.

On Sunday afternoon I listened in and heard Billy Mason – Ethne Collett's husband – speaking after his release or escape from the Prisoners of War camp in Italy. How glad they all will be to welcome him home to see his new baby and all. Ethnie used to read to me and do my typing etc when we lived at 53a Bree Street.

The latest news about Olive was contained in a postcard from Sister Kidd of Port Elizabeth. She has got over another 'op' better than former ones, having had some special treatment to prevent profuse bleeding which caused trouble on former occasions. She was not out of hospital then but expected to be able to go to her room at Humewood Mansions before coming back to Cradock. No doubt we shall hear from her direct before that happens.

Grace reports that Ted had a collision with the car recently but no one was injured but the car was damaged but it got home on its own power. They have four bikes and a motorcycle so manage to get along without the car for a time. Every home seems to be calling out for rain. We have not had any this month I am sorry to say. Now that we have stopped having fires, we have shifted the sofa from the dining room to the back stoep but it is getting too hot to rest there in the afternoons.

Am glad to say that Aunt Eliza's neck trouble seems to have passed over without any serious consequences. She has not been out since the Election Day. I think, and now that it is warmer I guess, she will not want to go anywhere. Their farming operations in the way of fowls and fantail pigeons seem to flourish. I think there are six of the latter and still more on the way. Dot was not able to get any homer pigeons for her boys.

I must not attempt any more for the week as there is other letters to be attended to. Hope all the family are well and that we shall get good news from them tomorrow when we generally get letters. Town Council meets this Tuesday evening. The Mayor is still away.

Had a nice letter from Lynne after her return to Queenstown. We enjoyed her visit and so did she, she says. Our garden boy is away sick, he has sent his son for the time-being. He has cut the grass which looks all the better. I must see about getting my Xmas cards ordered soon. Xmas will soon be here now. Goodbye.

Los of love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
November 3rd, 1943

My dear All,

November opened with a sharp hail storm on Monday afternoon and the lawn and garden generally look as though winter had returned. There was a good deal of hail with it but I am glad to say there is no sign of any leakages in the house – no windows broken. The rainfall measured one inch ten points. This is the heaviest fall in one day since April 21st when 1.35 was recorded. This is only the second day this year we have had over an inch recorded. It looks as though the record for the year will be below the average. It is Tuesday morning, the maid went out to the country on Saturday and has not yet returned and the boy does not come on Tuesdays. It looks as though the washing will be late this week. We have had some very hot days. Sunday it rose to 99, this morning it is only 75 max and 52 min. Mom finds it getting too hot to go to dinner every day so we are going back to the three days a week stunt, but I do not want any cooking on the off days – just a salad or bread and cheese – when cheese is available, which is not always the case.

Thursday will be Blodwen's birthday. They all went into Port Elizabeth last Sunday week to see Olive but did not phone first to see if she was still in hospital – she wasn't. Then they went to see Blodwen's sister, Mrs Merrifield, and found that they had all gone to Queenstown where Mr Merrifield has some work to see to. On their way home from Port Elizabeth, the car tyre got punctured so altogether, it was a disappointing trip. Better luck next time. We had a postcard from Mrs Whittle, or rather from Sister Kidd, who stays with her, saying that Olive was with them and though out of hospital, was still far from well and would stay at Humewood Mansions for a while before coming back to Cradock.

What do you think Aunt Eliza has got? Evidently her education was not completed when young or else perhaps it is a case of second childhood asserting itself. In addition to having an attack of whooping cough some time ago, she has now contracted a slight attack of German Measles. Fortunately it is not a bad case and has not kept her in bed. Raymond's little friends across the road have had it and so possibly he has contracted it as well. He brought us the news on his way to Sunday School and he thinks his mother has got a touch of it as well.

Joyce has had a more recent letter from Dudley suggesting that his golf sticks should be cleaned up as he was then hoping to be home for Xmas. Evidently his hopes were raised by the Allies' invasion of Italy but since then, of course, the position has changed and probably all our men are in Germany now. He had been very ill but was on the mend.

This is the menu we had for our first meatless day at the Premier last Wednesday: Soup, Potage potato cream, Ent; Cheese and macaroni pudding and tomato sauce; Fried Cape salmon and lemon; veg; Mashed potato, carrots and samp; Sweets: Steamed Canary pudding and caramel sauce. Tea or Coffee. It was quite good and we enjoyed it.

Whilst at my barber's recently, a Mr Wainwright, who used to work for Douglas, introduced himself to me. He was pleased to hear of Douglas and the Collens. He is working for young Antrobus who is up north. He says he was very fond of Bechuanaland and liked the country. Miss Metcalf has given me one of her father's waistcoats which fits me very nicely. She gave all his clothing away but wanted me to have something of his. She is very glad to be free of the Treasureship of the Women's Emergency League and so am I for her sake as it was a job she was not capable of doing. I always went over it for each month. You may be interested in knowing that I have disposed of my top hat, frock coat etc to a local undertaker. The £5 was more use to me than the clothing. The last time I wore it was at Mr Metcalf's funeral.

I have received an invitation from "The never give up tennis club" in the Location to open their courts on Wednesday afternoon. In the course of their letter, they say "the Mayor as father of the town is requested to deliver the opening address", failing the Mayor, his Deputy would be a highly appreciated substitute". The 1820 Settlers Association Congress is to be opened by me on Friday afternoon and the same evening there is a special meeting of subscribers to the Library to consider the revised rules we have been working on for some months.

Rev Briggs looks to leave soon after the first Sunday in January and has asked me to take a service on Xmas Sunday morning and the evening one on the 2nd Sunday if the new minister does

not arrive before then. Some of us went over to the station to see him as he passed down from attending the Conference at Bloemfontein recently. I had met him before and hope he will do well here. I understand he has a young family.

Tuesday afternoon. I went up to see how Aunt Eliza and Joyce had fared through yesterday afternoon's storm. The roof had leaked onto her bed and several places in the dining room but no serious damage was done. Both were up and about as usual, neither suffering much inconvenience from the measles, rather taking it as a matter of course. Raymond had gone to school and would probably catch it too.

I hear the storm has done a good deal of damage at the Council brickfields and some thousands of bricks have been spoilt. Some houses were flooded, trees uprooted etc. It has turned out a beautiful day. The storm was quite local.

Goodbye for another week. Hope you are all well,
Lots of love to you all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
November 10th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Tuesday afternoon and it has been raining all the morning and is still coming down nicely – soft steady soaking rain. Yesterday afternoon we had another storm so we are doing well for November. Last week's hailstorm does not appear to have done much damage but time will show.

Let me correct a mistake that I made quite innocently last week. Auntie sent me a note which she commenced but as her pen had run dry, Joyce finished it for her. It was Joyce that had contracted German Measles, not Aunt Eliza. Am glad to say Joyce was better when I saw her on Sunday afternoon. Have had a note from Olive saying she has to spend as much time as possible on the beach at Humewood. She has no plans for the future and does not say when she will be home again. I understand the house is to be sold in College Road.

We have had a nice letter from Ted's mother. She had lost our letter of sympathy. She is looking to spend some time at Kroonstad. Her son, Pat, is thinking of selling out in Natal and may go to New Zealand. They have at last struck water on their erf. Ted says it yields 300 gallons per hour. Grace is looking forward to doing some gardening now. They, too, have had good rains. Grace gives us the following heights of her children. David is 6 ft 3, Harold 6 ft 4, Pam 5 ft 9 and Jean 5 ft 4. They are all quite 'longfellows'. David and Harold were admitted to Church membership on Sunday evening. Baby Charles says he thinks he and his mother should come and live in Cradock as the park and swings are so handy. Quite a good idea.

When Mary went up to Sibesa, she left a room full of her furniture at her room in the Market Street house. Now there is a new tenant there – or will be at the end of the month – and her goods and chattels have to be removed. Ernest has suggested that we store them for Mary. It will mean giving up what we call the workroom. We are writing her about it. It is Mary's birthday on Thursday.

Evelyn writes that her garden is lovely. They have had some rain but more is needed to keep the soil moist as they have been busy planting the lands. Arthur and Rex have experienced some terrible dust storms up north. On one occasion they had to hang on to the tent pole. Their clothing was being blown all over the veldt. They are good boys and write home every week. This must be a great comfort to Douglas and Evelyn.

Mom slipped in the furrow recently, fortunately did not hurt herself seriously. She has been troubled with pains in her shoulders recently but do not think the fall had anything to do with that. Possibly a touch of (screws) as Aunt Eliza calls rheumatism.

The man who was Ranger at Addo Elephant Game Reserve dropped dead at Knutsford from a heart attack. Uncle Norman was with him at the time and had the unfortunate task of taking him home and later to Fort Beaufort where he was buried. We have not heard from the Armstrongs who took over the Rangership from Mr Johnston.

Dot writes that Reg lost about twelve pounds in weight during the last six to nine months – possibly owing to teeth troubles I think. I weighed myself a few days ago and am still 145½ lbs.

Blodwen had a happy birthday party and many presents. In the evening they had a musical turn, the Weavers singing duets with Blodwen. Some of their old Bloemfontein friends were also there. Dr Ruth is a good friend too. Blodwen is teaching some of the Railway orphans some Welsh songs for their Xmas party. Joe is on the committee of the Railway orphanage and is very interested in them. He gives them shows with his cine pictures and has snapped them.

Ruth writes that Denis has arrived up north. His address is: No. 329410 (V). Lieut D.R. Butler, Middle East Officers Pool, UK.D.F/M.E.F. Army Post Office, Durban. Will you all please make a note of this for reference. We have not heard from him direct, of course there has not been much time. Ruth and husband did not have nice weather for their holiday at East London, the wind was very objectionable. We understand that Dorothea and her father are contemplating residing in Natal after the turn of the year. We hope to keep in touch with her. Ruth also tells that Hugh Logie is now a Major and has become engaged. The capitals was a mistake on my part and have no particular significance. Am sorry to hear that Dick Brown has been ill again.

We had a nice letter from Dorothy Murray. Her baby died in the children's hospital in Johannesburg recently. Dorothy likes her new home and has a nice garden. The Jacaranda are in full flower. Here ours are only now putting on their new leaves. Some of them look as though the tops of the trees have been killed by the severe frosts we had. She says their lights are dimmed at 10.15 and switched off at 10.30.

Had a nice letter from Kingsley a few days ago. He says he likes cricket better than Rugby. I agree, I always said that Rugby was too rough a game. I played it a few times in England. I was fond of Soccer.

Joe has sent me "the tale of the shirt incident which happened at the golden Wedding". I am keeping it with my scrap album of that interesting event. I wonder if Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate are going to have any great celebrations in January.

The Conference of the 1820 Settlers Association last Friday afternoon went off very nicely and was quite a success. The numbers were not great but was very well represented by men of high standing from all over the Union. After refreshments, they asked if they might take a collection from amongst themselves on behalf of War Funds. They raised over £11 in a few minutes. I took some of the delegates to see the new houses in the Location in which they were interested. They were a nice lot of delegates.

The opening of the new tennis court in the Location did not take long. Mom went with me and she saw for the first time the new houses.

On Sunday evening, thirteen new member were publically admitted into the church membership. Rev Briggs invited parents or friends of any of the candidates to join with them at the communion table and a number did so. David and Hal were also admitted at a similar service at Kroonstad the same evening.

The special meeting of subscribers to the Pubic Library was held on Friday evening but only about a dozen attended. The new rules were adopted with only a few slight alterations. It has been a long job revising them.

Joe and family are booking for Cape Town about December 15th. Joyce is also going but a week or so earlier. So far the Railway will only book her seat as far as Naauwpoort and she has to apply again for bookings for the rest of the journey. It will be mighty uncomfortable for travellers on long journeys if the sleeping bunks are removed from the trains as the Administration had threatened to do.

Uncle Owen and family have returned from their trip to Port Elizabeth but we have not heard if they found any place to their liking as a new home for themselves.

Wednesday morning. We registered another 62 points of rain for the past 24 hours, this makes a total of 2.33 inches for November so far. The temperature dropped 66 for the past 24 hours, being 22 degrees lower than the previous day. As a matter of fact, I have taken to my cardigan again.

I do not know if I shall be able to send out my usual batch of greetings this Xmas. Ernest says they may not print them without special permit from the Control Officer. I shall be sorry to miss them as so many of my friends have expressed their appreciation of the messages. However I will see but the time is getting short.

If the weather keeps fine, we are looking to go to the bowling greens this afternoon as they are having a fete in aid of the Red Cross funds.

No post delivered yet so will close with lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as Wednesday November 17th, 1943

My dear All,

Tuesday morning again finds me at the typewriter. This morning it is very cold, just like winter. The thermometer stood at only five degrees in the middle of summer. On nine days out of the 15 so far behind us, this month we have had 3.64 inches of rain. We have not had such a rain all this year.

A good deal has been happening this week. On Wednesday last we motored up to see the Bowling Club Fete on behalf of the Red Cross funds. It was a perfect afternoon and some of the get-ups were very good. Harry MacLeod was dressed in some of his wife's clothes but his stockings gave him a good deal of trouble. He was a scream. We walked home but after a while, I came over very giddy. I had been lighting the boiler for bathing etc and found myself stumbling but did not actually fall but had to sit still for a long time before I could venture to move about. However after a warm bath and a hot water bottle, I had a fairly good night. I do not know what caused the trouble and hope it will not occur again. It is not a nice feeling at all.

You will be interested in hearing that Uncle Owen and family are back from Port Elizabeth. They have secured a house in Uitenhage from February 1st and will be living there then. The house has a nice garden and will afford Beryl much enjoyment as she is passionately fond of gardening. She made £17 at Redlands in selling violets for Red Cross funds. They could not get a place in Port Elizabeth, houses were so scarce and dear. They think they will like it at Uitenhage. They spent some time with Joe and Blodwen, had lunch there. Owen was not with them there. It will be nice for their family when they want a change to be so near to the sea. I envy them in that respect. Of course, Aunt Kate has many of her people in Port Elizabeth. They did not call here on their way back.

On Saturday afternoon, I was down to entertain about three dozen Afrikaans ladies who have been attending a conference here for a few days. I had arranged to take them on a motor trip round the town and Location and ending with a view from the top of Oukop but rain interfered with my plans. However we got round the town and mountain drive, Culdens and Metcalf Clinic and new Location and ended up at the Emergency League Hall where I had arranged for them to have tea etc. Only six out of the nine taxis I had engaged turned up so it was rather a squeeze to get them in. However they were kind enough to say they enjoyed the outing. The Mayor is still away. Next week, 26th, we are looking to go to the opening of the new road over the mountain connecting Cradock with Graaff Reinet. I hope it will not be as cold as the last time when I went over. Mom is looking to go this time as well. All the Councillors are going and their wives.

Olive returned last night (Monday). Cyril and Mildred came to town to meet her. I phoned this morning and Olive says she is much better and expects to pick up more quickly now she is home. She is busy packing up her things as the house and most of the furniture is to be sold as soon as possible.

Douglas phoned on Friday evening from Kimberley where he and Evelyn had gone for a few days. Douglas had a number of meetings to attend and of course there are the children to see. They were all well he said. Lynne is going home for Xmas. Douglas paying expenses. She will only have a few days as the firm has given her three extra for the trip.

Ted's mother is on a visit to Kroonstad. We had a nice letter from her recently. They have struck water on the plot at last, hope it is sufficient for their needs and that it will be permanent. Jean is going away for a holiday at Xmas. David and Harold were admitted to church membership last Sunday week.

I have written to Joe suggesting he makes enquiries regarding getting a position a physical trainer under a scheme which is in operation on the South African Railways but perhaps it would be too strenuous. Kate Owen said he did not look at all well.

Tuesday afternoon. A short letter from Denis came today. He evidently wrote whilst onboard. He says he was not seasick at all. He complains of the heat and says he perspires profusely for 24 hours a day. He hoes to see Arthur and Rex (I gave him their numbers and address). His friend Teddy Beck is still with him. He wishes his love sent to all the family in my

dear all, which I have pleasure in sending on. Today the weather has been as near perfect but it has turned cold again this evening. Have had my cardigan on all day the last two days.

Mom went to see Aunt Eliza this afternoon. She was up and about but has spent a couple of days or so in bed since last I wrote. Joyce thinks she has had a slight attack of measles. Ray has so far escaped. Am going to bed early so good night.

Wednesday. Had a good night. It is still cold and glad of my cardigan. Am feeling much better, slept till 4 a.m. had a hot bottle at my feet. Very nice post this morning. We are going to see Olive this afternoon if it does not rain. Will reply to Grace, Dot and Dorothy Murray later. Letter from Alice says Aunt Letty is not very well, is staying with her at present. The war news seems good so far as it goes but when will it all end? No word of Dudley or Collett boys. Hope you all are well. Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
November 24th, 1943

My dear All,

I am glad to be able to report that there has been no recurrences of the trouble recorded last week. It has been somewhat a strenuous week with the Mayor still away but have so far managed without any serious effect. He is expected back in December. Am glad to say that his wife is getting on nicely after the operation. The official welcome to the Women of the Dutch Reform Church on Saturday afternoon was somewhat spoilt owing to rain and we had to forego taking them up the Oukop. They were very interested in the new native houses the Council has erected. I got the local Emergency League to provide tea for them in the League Hall when I gave them a short address. The next function is on Friday morning when Mom and I hope to go to the opening of new road over the mountain. I have been invited to take part in the proceedings. We shall have a picnic lunch with delegates from Graaff Reinet. Do not know if any of the relations from that side of the mountain will be present. Alice and Dan Biggs celebrated their Silver Wedding recently. Aunt Letty is, or was, staying with them at the time and was not very well when Alice wrote acknowledging our congratulations. Hope she is better now.

This (Tuesday) morning, I attended the funeral of old Rev Reyneke who died on Saturday at the age of 88. He was minister here for nearly 38 years and had retired some years ago. He was the greatest amateur astronomer in the Union.

It has been a busy week owing to our Town Clerk and two Engineers having had to go to Pretoria on official business in connection with our building schemes. All our committee meetings have had to be crowded into this week and our usual Council meeting had to be put off to Thursday afternoon. Next week, December 1st, I have been asked by the W.C.T.U. to address the Licensing Court on the question of enforcing restrictions on the sale of liquor as the amount of drunkenness in town and Location is greatly on the increase. The non-Europeans who are on leave from the War and their womenfolk are ruining themselves. I hope we may be successful in getting some restrictions enforced.

Aunt Eliza now admits that she has had a slight attack of German Measles. It affected her voice somewhat but is now quite alright again I am glad to say. Joyce has got her seat booked through to Cape Town alright but she is not looking forward to the trip. Raymond so far has escaped Measles. Joe and Blodwen have also booked for Cape Town on December 15th. Hope they will be able to see something of Aunt Emmie and others whilst there. Lynne too is going home for Xmas. Douglas is paying her fare and her boss has given her some days extra holiday. Have asked her to try and spend New Year with us. Ruth and husband are looking to spend Xmas with Dick near Humewood. Would like them to come here when convenient to them. Denis has duly arrived up north but I do not know where. I have got my 400 Xmas cards and have already posted the ones for overseas. Hope you will like them when you get them.

Evelyn says Kingsley and Cecily are now taller than she is. In fact she is the shortest in the family. Kingsley is going to cadet camp at Bloemfontein for three weeks from January 3rd. Dot says that Norman is 5 ft and Alan 4ft 5 inches. Wonder if they are going to be taller than Reg and Dot. They have started a Dramatic Society in Potgietersrus, of course Stanley Gilbert is in it. As a matter of fact, he had to get out of bed to take his part as he was ill at the time. He had a bad time afterwards. There seems to be a lot of tummy trouble up that way. Chemist Watts is experimenting with the bark of the Thornwood tree with good results so Dot says.

Grace says they have had splendid rains and can now do some gardening. Ted is acting Postmaster for a time. Wish he could get his permanent appointment as such. Ted's Uncle, Rev Sorrie, is ever so much better since he came to Cradock. He is expecting to get appointed to some church but does not know where. Mr Pegan, also an asthmatic sufferer, staying at the Premier, who is a retired postal official and knew Cradock very well in the Boer War days. We had him to afternoon tea on Sunday.

Mom has brought in some green peas from the garden. We have not had a boy for over a week now and the garden is more or less a wilderness. Olive's boy is working full time at Olive's now until the house is sold on December 4th. I have hired a room at the old Dutch Reform

Parsonage at the back of the Town Hall for 10/- (ten shillings) a month in which to store Mary's furniture and there will be room enough for what Olive wants to store so the expense will not be so much for either of them.

Nurse Edith Collett is going to Fish River on December 1st for a while. She has not been well for a long time. Expect we shall see her as she is sure to come to town with Enid.

Ruth says that Denis and his friend, Teddy Beck, will be seconded to the Imperial Army which means he may finish up at the end of the world. He hopes to meet Arthur, Rex and others.

Wednesday morning. Nearly breakfast time and my paper is nearly finished and so is the news until the post comes which seldom is delivered before about dinner time. Olive and Mildred had supper with us last evening. They are tired of cleaning up all the rubbish as they call it at the house. We have not heard any details of Uncle Walter's Will.

Love to all,
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as December 1st, 1943

My dear All,

Rain, rain, go away, we used to say in the old country. It is Tuesday morning November 30th and we have had rain on 15 days this month – over five inches. We have only had a little over seven inches during the other ten months. Needless to say the garden is properly wet and you cannot get into it. We have had some hail too but everything is not destroyed yet.

We had a very hot day last Friday at the opening of the Wapadsberg Pass. Mr and Mrs Stock were in the same car with us. They had often travelled the old road and were very interested in the great improvements made. Douglas, too, used to go over the road in his courting days on his motorbike. It is a very good job they have made of it. The local farmers provided refreshments for the small crowd that assembled there but the heat was very trying. True, they did erect some sort of shelter by hanging a buck-sail over some poles where we were supplied with braaivleis lunch. Everyone was supplied with a stick on which about half a dozen pieces of meat, well cooked, was attached. Plates were supplied to those who wanted them but we ate ours direct from the meat skewer and enjoyed it. We each had a couple of chops cooked in the same way but not on skewers, eaten with our fingers, no knives or forks, and no vegetables, just with bread and butter. It was all very nice and I don't know when we had eaten so much meat. There was plenty of tea and coffee and cool drinks and stronger drinks for those who wanted it. Mom unfortunately had a cup of black coffee just before we started for home and that, together with the excessive heat – it was 99 in the shade when we got home – quite upset her until she had got rid of what she had had. However, she is none the worse for the outing now. We had hoped some of the Biggs might have been there but no such luck. We did meet a Mr Smith, who is a neighbour of Florrie's and is on the School Board with her. We also met Mr Hennie Meintjies, Aunt Rosa's nephew (I think) at any rate he is a son of Aunt Rosa's bridesmaid, Maude Maskell. Everyone was nice and friendly and my address was well received.

Wednesday morning I have to address the Licensing Court on behalf of the Coloured peoples' petition requesting further restrictions of hours for the sale of liquor. I hope to be successful. In the afternoon the Women's Emergency League are holding a big Fete on behalf of the Red Cross and other funds. They are serving tea in the library garden – weather permitting. In consequence of these events, I do not expect to be able to do much typing after today (Tuesday).

Olive had supper with us last evening and slept here. She will do so again tonight. Her furniture is at present stored in an outside room at her house. The property is to be sold on Saturday morning. She says she may buy it herself but her plans are not fixed. The furniture that is not wanted by any of the family is being sold directly after the property is sold.

Mary's furniture has been shifted to a room at the old Dutch Reform Church parsonage.

We have not made any plans for going anywhere for Xmas. The Briggs leave on Monday January 3rd and the new man arrives the same week, probably 5th or 6th.

Joe and Blodwen leave for Cape Town on December 15th and are due back about January 3rd. We have told Grace that the boys can come to us if they so wish. It is difficult to make plans even to go to Fish River as petrol is so short and most of the farmers are entertaining sailors or R.A.F. men. Accommodation at the coast is also unobtainable so I guess we shall just stay put. Lynne is going home and Jean is going away with a school friend till January 14th. We expect Dot and family will go to their farm about 20 miles from Potgietersrus. Hope all the children who have been sitting for their annual exams have done well. David and Harold are looking to go into some business or training perhaps at Johannesburg.

The reception over the wireless has been very indifferent lately, so much atmospheric that sometimes I have had to shut it down. The war news on the whole shows signs of it coming to a final clash before long. Our hopes of peace being declared before Xmas seems to be doomed to disappointment. Joyce is still without news from Dudley. She and Raymond leave next Saturday 4th for Cape Town. Am sorry not to fill the sheet this week but will try to do better next time.

Lots of love to all and hope to get letters from you in the morning. Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
as December 8th, 1943

My dear All,

Life is made up of disappointments – and other things – you all will be sorry to hear that Joe's trip to Cape Town is "off" for no reason of theirs but because of the booking arrangements not functioning "according to plan". They had booked their seats to Cape Town but there was no possibility of getting seats back so as to resume work on January 3rd. Blodwen's brother is in that Department at Cape Town and naturally tried his best to work it for them and their local Stationmaster also phoned to Cape Town on their behalf but without success. So they have written to us to find out if there is not some guesthouse in the district where they could get accommodation. I have phoned to two such without success. "All full" is the reply. Yesterday we wrote telling them to come to us and we will do the best we can for them with pleasure and shall be glad to have them. Kate Dudley phoned this a.m. saying that Blodwen had written asking if they could go to them and I understood her to say she was wiring them to come. I saw Uncle Owen at the station this morning as he passed up on his way home and he said they could put Joe up but they would not have room for more as their families were coming to them for their Golden Wedding. So between us, some plan will open for them. On all sides we hear that Joe is very far from well and something drastic must happen and that quickly. I have urged him to consult the best doctor available and act upon his advice, if necessary to resign from the Railway. Uncle Owen stayed part of the week with them as he found the hotel life too noisy for him. He says Joe must get a change. Under present plans, we expect the family to arrive here next Wednesday evening, 15th.

Uncle Walter's house was sold last Saturday. Olive bought it for £1150. She is not going to live in it but wanted an investment. Her plans are not fixed at present. She has gone to the farm (Cyril's) for the time-being. Some of her furniture is stored in the same room as Mary's. Joyce and Raymond arrived safely on Sunday afternoon. I saw them off on Saturday morning. Aunt Eliza seems to have a cold, we went to see her last evening (Tuesday). I do not like her staying alone, especially at night. She should have a woman in case of need. Mr Thomas would not be any use. Maude Miller tries to go in every afternoon to keep her company. However we hope for the best.

Rain and more rain has fallen. The garden is too wet to work in and weeds are all over the place. We have not had a boy for about a month so you can imagine what the place looks like. We have also had more hail but the fruit is not much damaged so far as I can see – and that is not very far. Olive brought us some nice ripe peaches and I got a few ripe plums on the war market this morning. I wonder if we are going to have such a good crop of figs and grapes.

Uncle Owen says he has bought three houses in Uitenhage and rented one on a three years lease with option of purchase. This is the one they are going to occupy themselves. There are one thousand choice roses in the garden. Joe may rent one of the houses from Uncle.

Xmas letter from Denis this morning. He says "as you probably know, I am no longer in the South African Army. A suitable job could not be found for me so I have seconded for the Royal Artillery. This means I may see service anywhere from Iceland to Bermuda and I am looking forward to seeing many foreign lands." He also sends his Xmas greetings to all the family circle. Ruth sends on my dear alls to him so he is kept more or less in touch with the family. We hope Dorothea has done well in her exams. Have not heard if she is definitely going to live in Durban next year. I have nearly finished addressing my 450 Xmas cards and will post them as soon as finished. Hope you will like the sentiments expressed thereon. It is a great joy to me to remember my friends.

Our rainwater tanks were all full and running over by the end of November. We shall not be short of water for a long time. Never have been since we had this house. Last Thursday evening we experienced a dreadful dust storm, the worst I can remember for years. I took some eggs to Mrs Davis before going to evening service and it was with difficulty I managed to walk there.

Am glad to say that our efforts at the Licensing Court were successful. I appealed to the highest ideals of the members of the Board and the great responsibility resting on them to remove the "stumbling block" from the path of those less fortunate than themselves. They have greatly

reduced the hours for obtaining liquor on Saturdays and I hope the result will be a marked reduction in drunkenness.

A special money raising effort was held on Monday afternoon. We both went and over and £450 was raised. Mom nearly choked whilst drinking a cup of tea and had to go out onto the stoep of the Town Hall. Joyce was with her. Fish River had a stall and many of the friends were in for the effort. Aunt Jessie had dinner with us. They do not come to town very often now owing to petrol shortage.

Reg and Dot say they may perhaps go to Johannesburg for a spin at Xmas but no definite plans made yet. Evelyn writes they are excited at the prospect of the children being home for the holidays on Friday. Lynne goes home on 22nd and has a week at home. If Joe and family go to Grass Ridge, we might invited ourselves to go to Aunt Jessie for a day or so.

Blodwen writes that Roy and Merle have done exceedingly well in their Trinity College of London first Music exam. Both passed in Honours. What else could be expected from such grandchildren. Hearty congratulations. The examiner said their style, fingering and technique were excellent. "They were packed to the brim with music and this should take them far if they kept it up."

An old friend whom I have known for many years here has just had word of his son's accidental death whilst flying in Italy. The day before he received the news, he and his wife received a letter from him enclosing £20 as a Xmas present from him. He has written regularly to his parents twice a week ever since he left home. Many years ago, Dick Upton and I visited him on a farm in the district over the Zwarshoek Mountain. I remember it took us four hours to push our bikes up the mountain and only about 20 minutes to go down the other side. Mrs James is his name. He is the secretary to the local Building Society.

On Sunday I had an interesting call from a local preacher from Cape Town, a Mr Uys. He took over the Secretaryship of the Cape Town Local Preachers' Association from me when I left Cape Town in 1934. I was interested in hearing of many of my old friends. He came in after evening service and we talked till past 10. He is now Travelling Inspector of stocks on the National Roads and goes all over the country. He thought I was living in Dordrecht and enquired for me there.

Wednesday morning. We had a very good night last night. Slept right through till 5.30 then made Mom a cup of tea and was up by six as usual. I took one of Dr Scholtz' tablets when I went to bed which evidently did the trick. I don't like taking them very frequently. Have finished addressing my Xmas cards and am posting them this morning so as to give the officials a chance to get them sorted. I met Olive yesterday afternoon, she has been staying at the Poplars since the sale as they have a garage there and we have not. She has let the house and stored what furniture she has bought or kept in the same room that I got for Mary's goods and chattels. It will save both of them some expense.

According to the news over the air this morning, Smuts is on his way home after calling at Cairo and having talks with Churchill and Roosevelt. What a wonderful man he is. I do hope nothing untoward will happen to him.

Grace and Ted will be celebrating – at least I expect they will – their 19th anniversary of their wedding day. May they be spared to see many more such anniversaries.

Wednesday afternoon. We are rather expecting Aunt Eliza this afternoon as Mr Thomas said he might bring her down. We shall be pleased to see her as I think it will be the third time since our Golden Wedding that she has been to our house. Nice letters from Grace and Dot this morning. Grace reports a severe hail storm during the week which had done a lot of damage to mealies, etc. This was during the night. I have always been under the impression that hailstorms did not occur during the night but evidently I am wrong.

Nothing further from Uitenhage so hope all is shaping for their arrival next Wednesday. As I have a big job on for the Library which can best be done on a Wednesday afternoon when the Library is closed, must get on to it now before Aunt Eliza comes. We are both keeping well and hope all the circle are the same. Lot of love to all, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock
December 15th, 1943

My dear All,

It is Tuesday morning early, the street and garden is wet and we have not seen much of the sun lately. We have not had a garden boy for about a month so you can imagine what the garden looks like. We shall want a reaping machine to mow the grass, which is now in seed. I cannot do it and am not going to attempt it. Boys are difficult to get and they do not want to work for 2/3 a day. We have not had any figs or any fruit from the garden yet. Our tanks are still full and running over at the least fall of rain. Olive has bought half the length of our garden hose. Hers was sold by mistake on her sale and she is anxious for her tenant to keep her garden nice. Rubber hose is not obtainable at any price so we let her have 40 feet of ours. She is looking to go to Port Elizabeth with Miss Metcalf as soon as they can get accommodation which is difficult to obtain. She is certainly getting better in health but Dr wants her to go to the coast. She has been staying at the Poplars for about a week as she is able to have her car there as well. She comes to us for meals occasionally.

On Friday evening, whilst I was at the Location as Returning Officer for an Election of Advisory Board members and did not get home until past nine, Bishop Fergusson Davie phoned asking for any news of Denis. Mom could not hear too well so I phoned him when I got home. It appears that Dorothea had not heard that Denis had actually been transferred to the British Army, she knew there was talk of it. She seemed anxious but I do not think I was able to give any later news than what she had. Our last letter from Denis was November 28th and received on December 7th, airmail of course. Dorothea said she had accepted a post at Maritzburg for January. We hope everything is alright.

Joe and family will be leaving for Cape Town on Wednesday evening. He was anxious to have a quiet rest on a farm and Aunt Kate Dudley had wired for them to go to Grass Ridge. However they have decided to go to Cape Town and we hope the change will do them all a lot of good. I have asked Joe to see the best specialist he can get and be overhauled and if necessary, he must give up his job. They will have to take their chance of getting back, as the Department say they could not book their seats. Perhaps Blodwen will stay longer, when the booking may be easier. We have not made any plans but it looks as though we shall spend Xmas quietly at home. Lynne leaves for home on 23rd and has a week at Vryburg. Jean is going with a school chum to East London. The boys hope to earn a little pocket money by helping at the Post Office. It is not yet definitely decided what David and Harold are going to do. I think they will wait and see the exam results first. Dot says they may all be going to Pietersburg on January 6th to see the R.A.F. passing out parade when pilots get their wings. Of course the children are looking forward to it. Norman tied with three others for second place in the Sunday School prizes. Norman and another boy sang a duet and Alan took part in a trio and Norman sang "Still the night" as a solo. Evidently there is a lot of musical talent in the Butler family. At the Sunday School entertainment when these items were given, Baby Anthony who was sitting on the floor, spotted Dot with a baby girl sitting on her lap so he shouted to "Uncle" Reg, "Aunty Hudson has a baby on her knee. He was evidently jealous.

Mary says her Mother is better and that Florrie and Kathleen have returned from a nice holiday in Pretoria.

I hear this morning over the air that the King is to broadcast on Xmas Day at five p.m. South African time. We are very glad that General Smuts is safely back in South Africa.

We are getting a two gallon tin of honey from Frank Short. Hope it arrives before Xmas. He is sending it in a cream can, which of course we shall return.

Tonight (Tuesday) we are having a farewell social to the Briggs. I have been asked to make a small presentation. Hope it passes off well. The new man will not be able to arrive before the third Sunday in January.

Xmas cards are beginning to come in. Some have written expressing appreciation of the sentiments. Mrs Halse was one of the first to write.

I am enclosing a small sum for each of the young children for them to get something for themselves for Xmas, if they want or they can put it by. The children of older growth must be satisfied with our good wishes for Xmas.

Wednesday morning, 6.30. The social last evening went off very well. There was a good attendance and everyone seemed very sociable. Ministers from the Anglican and Baptist churches were there, also Rev Sorrie and wife. Ernest was there to report it as Alison is not well.

I have received the following letter from the W.C.T.U. "On behalf of the W.C.T.U, I wish to thank you very much for your willingness to speak for us at the Licensing Court. We do indeed thank and praise God for the wonderful answer to prayer, and the way in which he used you to fulfil His purpose. Thank you again. We do appreciate it. May God richly bless you." There has been a marked improvement in the decrease of drunkenness since the Court sat.

We have bought a small Xmas pudding but do not know when we shall eat it.

Perhaps we may go to Fish River for a week, will leave instructions for post to be forwarded if we do.

Letter from Arthur just go hand. He is a driver now and is seeing a good deal of the country.

Love to all,
Dad

34a Dundas Street, Cradock
Wednesday December 19th, 1943

My dear All,

If is not often that I have to start writing my weekly epistle so late as it is today. It is nearly noon and I have been busy all the morning and hope to be in time for the post. I sent a double dose last week and had I not made the mistake of taking too little supply of paper with me to Grass Ridge, I could have done another sheet. However we had a rest and you also were spared the difficulty in reading some of my bad typing. I am afraid that I cannot relate our subsequent doings in correct date order but that may not make any difference.

We had a variety of weather for the most part, hot and very close at night. Uncle Dudley took us all up to see the dam which is about three feet from the top. It has only been running over twice since it was built many years ago. Trollip, who is in charge of the works, had a serious heart attack recently and has been in town ill for sometime. We were surprised to see the crowd of native servants on the place. We watched Aunt Kate and her sister play tennis a couple of times. Her sister has been on the staff of Healdtown Native Institution for several years and is a great friend of Ethnie Collett, who used to read to me and do my typing when I was getting blind. She is much like her sister and is a great help to her. She is a trained nurse and has great responsibilities. Mrs Jubb, their step-mother, goes to Grass Ridge every summer. She is 84 and is very clever with knitting, crochet and tatting. She originally came to South Africa as a milliner to a Grahamstown firm. I understand she has been twice married and had no family. She is very quiet, does very little walking. Her lace work fascinated Mom.

Christmas Day was very hot. Aunt Jessie, Mr Barnes, and the Katkop family all came up to dinner – twelve of us in all. Everything was very nice, cold fowls, ham etc etc. and of course plum pudding, custards, fruit and the usual luxuries. Neither of us got anything out of the pudding which was especially disappointing after all the mixing we gave it. All stood behind their chairs while grace was said and all did justice to the good things provided and there was no after ill effects. We all listened to the King's speech at five p.m. and stood to attention whilst the National Anthem was sung. Speeches were not indulged in but we all wished that the absent members of the family could have been with us. The giving of Xmas boxes to the servants was a great do. All the men received a pair of khaki trousers, the maid a dress length, also a slab of home made cake, sweets for the children and ginger beer all round. They gave us a little sing song as well. We too had a number of hymns. On Friday evening some of us sat up to listen to President Roosevelt speak from America. It was a good speech and showed great confidence in victory.

After a fairly early supper on Xmas day, Aunt Jessie and Mr Barnes took us with them to Saltpansdrift and spent the night and Sunday with her. How we missed the wireless, theirs is out of order so we did not get any news of the outside world. Sunday afternoon Gladys Collett, Uncle Jack and Aunt Agnes, Harvey Brown, Winnie and a small crowd of children and four sailors, who have been spending a holiday on the farms, came for afternoon tea and cake which was much enjoyed. I went back with Jack and Agnes to see Edith Collett who is lying very ill at Retreat. Enid is nursing her. She has contracted pneumonia and pleurisy and in addition to her asthma, makes her very bad. Since we returned, Jack phoned to say he could not come to town Tuesday for a Church meeting as Edith had had a stroke and the Dr had been out and said there was not much hope for her to regain consciousness. We have not had any news since.

We had dinner at home on Monday – some stewed apricots and a little fish. I do not know which upset Mom but in the night she was terribly sick, vomiting and tummy badly upset. She has never had such an attack. However in the afternoon of Tuesday, Uncle Gervase came in for the meeting and brought Aunt Jessie and Rouena with him. As they had made a mistake of the time, they did not stay. Mom is quite herself again now except for feeling weak.

I went to see Aunt Eliza on Monday afternoon and found her well. She always expects us to find our house burgled whilst we are away but am glad to say that so far nothing has happened. A letter from Dudley dated October 10th arrived the day before so I sent Joyce a wire to that effect. He was in a Prisoner of War Camp in Germany and was fairly well. Quite a number of others have had messages from their boys to the same effect.

Dudley has had only a card from one of his three. Uncle Bertie's son had a son born on Xmas morning. Great rejoicings.

Wednesday afternoon. Not much time for more. We are both refreshed for the change but could have done with a longer holiday. Have had one – a joint one – letter from Joe and Blodwen. They have been to see Aunt Emmie, Joyce etc. Joe says we are not to worry about him but others say how ill he is looking. Aunt Katie is very sorry they did not go to her. Douglas says he must go and recuperate at Vryburg. I have a lot of letters to answer when I get time and cards have been coming in in larger numbers than ever before. Nothing this week from any of the family. I have not exhausted all that I would like to write about but I see the paper is nearly finished so must put off till next year further comments. They all say I am looking better for the change.

Happy New Year to all,

Dad

as from 34 Dundas Street, Cradock, At Grass Ridge, Fish River
as Wednesday December 22nd, 1943

My dear All,

Mom and I are here having come out with Rev and Mrs Briggs on Sunday morning for service and look to stay until after Xmas. When we found that Joe and Blodwen were not coming and feeling that a little change would not do us any harm, we phoned to find out if it would be convenient at Aunt Kate often has visitors. Mrs Jubb and one of Kate's sisters, who is on the staff at Healdtown Native Institution, are here. We have been made very welcome. Of course I have brought some work to do but am not sure how far I shall be able to get with it as there are always some little jobs to do for the house for which I have brought a few tools. I have also brought a number of old letters and papers I want to look through and destroy. The weather has also to be taken into account. On Saturday just after dinner, we had a very heavy thunderstorm, accompanied with hail. In half an hour we registered 60 points and again in the evening we had another 40. Since then it has been bitterly cold. Fortunately I brought my cardigan and have had it on all the time since we left town. A cold south-east wind has been blowing and it has been best to stay indoors. It is Monday morning as I am writing, sitting in the sun in what has always been called the boys' room. It catches the morning sun. Aunt Kate says there may be an opportunity to post tomorrow as they generally send cream away that day so I want to have something ready to send as no one knows when there will be another chance owing to petrol being so sparingly rationed. The holidays, too, make it uncertain when you will get letters. For instance, Dot's last letter posted as usual on Monday, only reached us on Saturday instead of Wednesday. Katie tells us they will not be able to take us about to see people for the same reason – petrol. However, Aunt Jessie, Mr Barnes and perhaps other members of the family are coming here for Xmas dinner so we will return with her and stay over at Saltpansdrift over Sunday 26th, and go home by train on Monday morning. There were about a dozen to dinner there yesterday. Mr Briggs is coming out to hold Xmas service on Saturday morning but no one from here will be going down. Mrs Willie Saunders was not at service yesterday as recently she had a nasty fall in her garden and Clifford and May had to carry her home. She is getting over it but evidently it shook her up rather badly. The congregation was smaller than usual – petrol shortage – again. The farewell social to the Briggs on Tuesday was a friendly affair, but I expect I mentioned it last week.

Olive had an experience in going out to the farm last Thursday afternoon. She did not leave until after four – she was alone in her car – and something went wrong with the car and she could not locate the trouble. She has driven thousands of miles and is a very careful driver. However she had to leave the car and walk back to the nearest house – which happened to be a roadside store. The owner of the shop was not at the house and had to be sent for. He kindly went on his bike to see what was wrong and after waiting some time, he arrived back with the car running. It appeared that a wire had rusted at one of the terminals. She arrived at Cyril's farm about nine at night. She was glad that no such incident had ever happened when Uncle Walter was with her. She has now gone for a holiday with Miss Metcalf by car to Port Elizabeth. She does not know how long she will be away. Doctor wants her to stay at the coast for some time to benefit her health. Am glad to say she is much better since the operation. She has let the house and stored her furniture. It was her birthday last Friday. According to my diary, Summer commences on Wednesday 22nd, but if it stays like this, it will be more appropriate to say that winter is commencing.

Monday evening. Uncle Dudley says he will be sending a boy to the station by cart before breakfast with cream to go away by train so I can send this off. Not that it is worth sending by itself but just to let you know how we are and that you are not forgotten. The weather has been kinder today than yesterday – not quite so cold and the wind has not been so strong. Mom has been playing the piano, she has not lost her touch or her memory of the old pieces and it has given pleasure to all. We walked as far as the cattle kraal and admired Uncle's fine herd of 39 Red Afrikaner cows. Mr Moorcroft had dinner here as he came out to buy some cattle. I have not touched any of the work I brought out to do. In fact, I did not feel equal to doing anything yet. I did not have too good a night last night but hope to do better tonight. Happy Christmas to all from

Dad

Grass Ridge, Fish River, as from 34 Dundas Street, Cradock
It is Thursday December 23rd, 1943

My dear All,

Extra edition.

It is Thursday morning and a very hot one. I am sitting in the cool drawing room at Grass Ridge. All the windows are closed to keep out the heat and being on the shady side of the dear old home, is the coolest spot to work in. Kate and her sister, Margaret, are busy preparing morning tea, the ingredients have been brought round for everyone to have a share in the stirring of same, the ring, thimble and a number of tickies have gone into making it complete and we are to look forward to the result in two days time. After such expert mixers, the result should be all that can be desired. There are no young people here at present and I do not know that there will be any. Aunt Jessie and Mr Barnes are, I know expected – they cannot be classed as young – and I think a contingent from Katkop is also coming up.

I typed my usual on Monday, it was sent to the station on Tuesday when the cart went down with the cream cans to the station. I suppose the letters were sent into Cradock by the next morning train and would leave Cradock that evening or the next morning for their various destinations and owing to the Xmas holiday arrangements, I don't suppose you will all get them before next Tuesday. Whenever this one will reach its destination is doubtful.

The cold spell of Sunday and Monday has given place to fine days since. Tuesday and Wednesday were perfect but I am still wearing warm underwear. Aunt Katy and her sister were playing tennis on Tuesday afternoon and in the evening we played "can you go". We have plenty of music, Aunt Katy is passionately fond of music and Mom has given some of her old favourites which are much appreciated. I am glad to say the wireless is in good working order and keeps one in touch with what is going on in the world. Our hopes that the World War would be over by Xmas is doomed but I still think that the enemy will crack suddenly one of these days.

I have brought out my rainfall figures to work out the averages up to date. They are already now and only waiting for December to close. So far it appears that our average for the past sixty six years will be about the same as last year. November, however, has broken all records. We had 5.65 inches, the highest we have ever had. Kroonstad and Vryburg have both had good rains and we hope they will have good harvests. We picture Lynne in the train today nearing Vryburg. Evelyn writes that she cannot get back to her work in time to start on the correct day. We wonder how Joe will fare when he has to be at work on 3rd. We have not heard of their arrival at Cape Town yet but no doubt we shall get letters in due course.

Yesterday. (Wednesday) the post brought us 76 envelopes, cards and papers. Nearly a record. One post at Vryburg, we had 81. Of course these did not include any from the family as they generally arrive in Cradock about 9.30 on Wednesday mornings. There may be an opportunity of getting post again tomorrow as Uncle Dudley sends cream away to the station. We have decided to go to Aunt Jessie's on Saturday evening and go into Cradock from there on Monday. It will save sending us from here specially. We will have two nights there. I have important meetings to prepare for on Tuesday so must get back. Rev Briggs is holding a Christmas service at the Station on Xmas morning but Uncle Norman says petrol is too short to allow of making another journey this week.

I have not been sleeping too well here but generally get a nap or two during each day. Noises in my head have worried me somewhat but I am thankful for the change and quiet. One afternoon I slept ill half past four. We generally retire about ten. I am always up in time for the seven o'clock news.

In last weeks letter, Douglas or Evelyn reported that Gwen Ambler was staying with them and Len was expected shortly. Their son was down on leave but had since returned to duty. Douglas says he is coming down to our Diamond Wedding, if not before. We hope it will be long before that event. Grace reported that Jean came top in her class and Pam was 20th out of a class of 137 in Standard seven. The boys think they have done sufficiently well to gain passes.

Various suggestions have been made for us to take a holiday at the coast sometime about February or March but we are not making any plans yet. My own feelings draw me towards

visiting the various home once more before I get too old. I can certainly notice the difference in altitude here from Cradock and it takes a little time to get used to the change. However we shall see if way opens in due course. At present it would be far too hot.

At the last meeting of the Town Council, I told them that this was probably be the last time I should wish them the compliments of the season as a fellow Councillor. There are a number of new developing schemes coming on such as water meters, waterborne sewage, concrete roads, new hospital etc and it may be that younger men will be found to carry these and other schemes to fruition. Not that I am not interested in them but that they should take their share of responsibility.

Uncle is sending to the station before breakfast so post must close now.

I hope all families will have a happy Xmas by the time this reaches you.

God bless you all,

Love to all,

Dad