

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All

I see I have already made a mistake in dating my first letter written in 1936 as 1935. I expect many others will do the same. Well, we are well into the new year and I repeat the oft quoted wish, A happy new year to you all. You will want to know how we spent the time and we shall be interested in hearing what you all did. We are glad to have heard from most of you regarding your Xmas doings and are glad to hear that all the different homes had happy times together. We are expecting news from some who have not yet written but news has come from most families.

On New Year's Eve, we were ready to go to Grass Ridge. The car was outside whilst Grace was reading to me in the lounge. All of a sudden we heard a crash and found that a native boy, who was drunk and riding a push bicycle, had run into the rear of my car. Fortunately having the phone, we were able to ring up the police and we handed the man over to him. He dented the car above the back window in two places and scratched the car in some places. He was fined 10/- for being drunk but is doubtful if I shall be able to recover the cost of damages (estimated at £2) from him.

It was a broiling hot drive to Grass Ridge which we reached about six pm. Grace has secured her driving licence on Friday and so took the wheel and did very well. We had a very nice time with Uncle Dudley and Aunt Katie. The only visitor they had was a nephew from Johannesburg, a lad about 14. He was very nice with the boys and they thoroughly enjoyed the visit. They soon found the mulberry trees, strawberries etc. The river, with its old boat, was a big attraction. Of course we went to see the Grass Ridge dam which, by the way, has not much water in it at present. The coco pan railway along the top of the wall was in demand. The wireless is a new addition since our last visit and is a great source of enjoyment. The reception was, for the most part, good. The old year programme was fair but not sufficiently attractive to encourage us to sit up to see the old year out. In former years, it was the custom of the young bloods to fire the old year out at midnight. This time, we satisfied ourselves with performing this ceremony before breakfast on January 1<sup>st</sup>, the young folk eagerly collecting the empty cartridge cases. We listened in to the motor cycle race at East London in the afternoon. It was very exciting and no doubt we heard more of the race and the progress of the 25 competitors than the thousands of spectators who were watching the performance. The 200 miles were covered in about two hours.

After breakfast on 2<sup>nd</sup>, we went to see Uncle Walter and Olive at Groenkloof. They were expecting us and made us very welcome. Uncle was very bright but is not able to walk about much. He sits under the big fir tree in front of the house and directs operations. He has not got the wireless as he says he cannot hear well enough but I think he should have it if only for Olive's sake. She must feel very lonely there at times. After dinner, we returned to town, Grace driving all the way out and back. We found that a good rain had fallen in our absence and had damaged the kitchen etc. Our boy John did not turn up again on Friday. He says his shoulder was sore from working with a couple of wheelbarrow loads of sand. We shall have to face getting another boy as we cannot go on like this any longer. We have been to the Warm baths several times and the children do so enjoy swimming and jumping in the water. We have rigged up a sort of shower in the garden which on hot days they enjoy getting under. We visited Mrs Hartmann at her farm and met some old friends. Grace and family are looking to leave for Bloemfontein on 16<sup>th</sup>. Aunt Eliza has entertained us a couple of evenings. Nurse Mary has also been kind in having the children there.

It is now Monday afternoon and I must not attempt another sheet so goodbye for this week. Many thanks for all letters received. I will try to write individual letters as soon as I get time.

Much love to all, Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Monday morning early. It seems necessary always to commence my letters with an apology for being busy and not finding time to write. In reality, I seem to do very little else but sit at my desk writing to someone or other. I do realise increasingly that I get through much less than I used to and far less than I have the desire to accomplish. Perhaps this is due to increasing age and slowness of brain power.

I must thank you all without any exception for your very loving birthday greetings received during the week. I do greatly appreciate your wishes for a prolonged life and good health. So long as I can be of any service to one and another, I shall be satisfied. When I am no longer fit for work I pray I may go hence. I trust I may never be a burden to others.

Tuesday morning. I could not get very far with my letter yesterday as I had a number of meetings to attend. Last Thursday, we motored out to Uncle Bertie's for dinner. Grace did the driving as usual. We had a very nice time there and in the afternoon, we all listened in to the official opening of the first SA national Jamboree at East London. It came through very clearly. Uncle Bertie has a very nice battery set and generally gets good reception. The children were interested in looking out for dassies, monkeys etc along the road to the farm. I do not know how many times we crossed the spruit in six miles after leaving the main road but it was quite interesting. Spelmanskop is noted for its oranges but this year the crop is likely to be a failure owing to late frosts. The children enjoyed the mulberries etc. Some of the grandchildren were spending the school holidays there so there were plenty to entertain the young folk.

We have been out to the Warm baths several times. It is greatly enjoyed. Some of the children can swim a little. We must go again before they leave.

Grace and children are returning home on Thursday morning and will arrive in Bloemfontein the same evening. Of course they will stay with Joe and Blodwen over the weekend. It is possible Ted will join them by car but he has to be at work early on Monday. Schools reopen next week. I hope all the children of the different families have had very happy holidays. I am glad to hear of rain having fallen at Vryburg. It has hindered the brick making at Douglas' but will have done good to the veldt. The children are no doubt very interested in the new home being built. I wonder when it will be completed. Am also glad to hear that rain has fallen at Potgietersrus. The drought there has been very severe. Stock are reported as dying from sunstroke. I have never heard of that before.

Joe will not hear the result of his oral examination for some time. I hope he has passed. He is back at his old job but I hope promotion will not be long delayed. Norman seems to have had a very happy birthday party.

Ruth writes that she and Denis have greatly enjoyed their holiday at Port Elizabeth. The weather was not too kind but it has done them both good.

Rev and Mrs Barnes are leaving for their trip round the world on Monday and a social farewell is to be held on Thursday evening. Rev and Mrs Jennings will arrive about Feb 7<sup>th</sup>.

We shall miss Grace and the children terribly when they leave and wonder who will be the next visitors. We tried to get to the egg rock this morning but the road was too bad so we turned back. I must not attempt another sheet as I have other letters to write.

Much love to all as though named from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Tuesday morning 21<sup>st</sup>. The King is dead. Such was the news I heard flashed over the wireless a little before seven this morning. It is a very serious blow to the Empire. I have been listening in every hour and everything has come through most clearly. It is not yet known when the funeral will take place but we may hear that before this is posted tomorrow afternoon. I am sitting up until 11.30 tonight to hear Mr Baldwin's speech. We have just listened to General Smuts who paid a very fine tribute to the late King. I am typing this whilst waiting up, Mom has gone to bed.

Well here we are alone after the visit of Grace and her four children. We miss them greatly. They are full of life and energy. We are extremely sorry that they had such an uncomfortable journey back. The conductor put them into a first class coupe and promised me to see that they were put into a full compartment (second class) after the train had left. This he never did, in fact Grace says he did not even come to examine their tickets until they reached Naauwport. Their train was late and consequently did not get to Joe's before ten pm. However we hope they have enjoyed the holiday and that it will have done them good. We have not yet heard of their arrival back in Kroonstad.

We have not been anywhere since Grace left us. I shall be going to Tarka for the morning service next Sunday as Rev Barnes is away. Mr Dodd was in town today and says Mrs Dodd is laid up with varicose veins. I expect to go there to dinner after service. Mr Willie Brown is staying at Tarka with Hilda and George. I shall be sorry to miss seeing them as they are going to take some of their children to school which opens on Monday.

We have not had our boy John since Saturday. I suppose he will say he hurt himself in shifting the flower stand from the back to the front as Grace suggested. I helped him with the big tray and told him not to strain himself. We have practically decided to let him go at the end of the month and we will get our own breakfast and supper and get Mrs Heathcote to send two dinners across as she did when we first came.

Olive Collett had a nasty accident recently as she was coming back from George's farm at Tarka. George was in the car and they met his donkey wagon on the road. They stopped to speak to the boy and Olive, who was driving the car, put out her hand to frighten or push one of the donkeys further from the wagon. Her hand caught in some wire or something attached to the donkey and it tore her hand open very badly. She had to stay in hospital for some days and a number of stitches had to be put in. She is better now and is able to drive with one hand. The other is still bandaged.

Rev and Mrs Barnes had a very nice send off on Thursday evening at the social. It was a social. They left on Monday morning and look to be back in August. Rev and Mrs Jennings do not arrive until about the 7<sup>th</sup> February.

My brother Willie has sent a very kind invitation for me to visit the if I go home but I am afraid it is out of the question for this year.

Wednesday morning, 22<sup>nd</sup>. The address of Mr Baldwin came through very well. It was a grand testimony of a wonderful life. There is nothing on the air this am.

Our boy has turned up. Says he has been looking for another job and has got one in town. We shall let him go at the end of the month. We shall probably get a midday meal sent in to us for a time. Do not know if we shall get any post today but hope so.

Ruth is spending a fortnight at Port Alfred. She writes that she is much better for her holiday at Port Elizabeth. Reg and Dot will be going for two weeks holiday at Vryburg from Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>. Hope they have a nice time as no doubt they will. Hope to hear from Joe and Blodwen soon. Douglas' children go back to school on Monday.

Much love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

It is not often that I only start my circle letter on a Wednesday morning but circumstances have been such this week that it has been impossible to make an earlier start. The passing of the King has called for some attention. It has been wonderful to be able to hear at first hand the various functions from overseas as to what is happening from hour to hour. I do not know what I should do without the wireless as I find it increasingly difficult to read the newspapers. However, that is by the way. I have written to Durban for a supply of the remedy which Mrs Sowden recommended for her eyes and will give it a trial. If I can avoid an operation, I shall be glad to do so.

On Sunday morning, Mr Byrnes and I went to Tarka Training College for service. Mr and Mrs Dodd and Nessie were there and Mrs Mahon and her son. Mrs Dodd played the hymns and Mr Mahon read the lesson. None of the students attend the service, they tell me, as most of them are Anglicans. There were 19 present. We were back in town in time for dinner.

On Monday morning I was asked to bury a child (Dutch) who nearly a year ago drank some caustic soda by accident. She was only three years old and has suffered terribly. The same afternoon I attended the funeral of Mrs Metcalfe who died on Sunday afternoon. There were crowds of people present as Mrs Metcalfe, wife of Attorney Metcalfe, was so well known and beloved by all. Then Tuesday morning was the united memorial service for the King in the Dutch Reformed Church. This was well attended. After it was over, the Dodds and Nessie spent an hour or so with us before going back to the farm. Mrs Heathcote came over in the afternoon to listen to the King's funeral service from Windsor. It was not too clear. It is the Town Council meeting tomorrow evening and this has necessitated reading thirty pages of typewritten reports etc. It is all very interesting and of some benefit to the town.

We anticipate that Dot and Reg are at his home by this time. Letter just to hand from Dot does not state when they start, so my letter will be waiting for them there. Grace writes that she is collecting tins in which to make a garden. Some garden I guess. I am sorry to hear that Len Ambler has been committed for trial on account of his accident. I don't expect he will be convicted. I am not driving at present as I had a small accident the other day. The car only was slightly damaged. Joe and Blodwen are going to Kroonstad for the weekend to attend the wedding of Mrs Webb's daughter on Saturday. Rev and Mrs Jennings are due here some time next week. I have to arrange for a wedding in the church here sometime in March. The groom is a helpless cripple – infantile paralysis. Joe is thinking of going in for a sedan car. They find his two-seater with dickey seat too inconvenient, especially for the children.

Aunt Eliza has had a touch of rheumatism in her knees but is better and gets about as usual now. It was very painful for a few days. Mom has been troubled with backache during the past few days, otherwise we are both well.

Our boy leaves at the end of the month. He says he has got a job as a painter at 2/- a day. I really think it is a try on to get more wages from me. I am not going to ask him to stay as we can manage in other ways. Our wash girl will do in the meantime.

I have been trying to answer some of the numerous Xmas letters received but have not finished the task yet. Aunt Letty has gone to Graaff Reinet for a change. She was in Cradock for about four months. She generally came to see us daily and often had a meal with us. She is wonderfully active. She is always knitting. Olive Collett's hand is getting better. Uncle Jack has gone on a visit to his brother Jim's where Joe and Blodwen went for their holiday. We expect Rev Douglas to spend a day or two with us shortly. He is preaching here on Sunday night. It is Mom's birthday next Tuesday.

Much love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1936  
Mom's 74<sup>th</sup> birthday

My Dear All,

It is Mom's 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary today and she has had letters from almost all of you wishing her many happy returns of the day. Dorothy wired from Vryburg their greetings by which we knew they had arrived there on their holiday. We have had a quiet day. Willie Saunders called in the morning as he was in for the stock fair. He reports all well on the farm. They all enjoyed Rev Douglas' visit. In the afternoon Mom went to the monthly WCTU meeting. They have inspanned me to act as Recording Secretary whilst Mrs Barnes is away on six months furlough. The meeting only lasted an hour and does not involve much extra work for me. There were about a dozen present. The deputy Mayor, Mrs van Rensburg, is President.

Wednesday morning. Aunt Eliza asked us up to her house for Lexicon in the evening as she does not go out at night. We would have liked her to come to us with some friends but she had them there instead. We had a nice evening. We took up a birthday cake.

We have been having very peculiar weather lately. Saturday was hot, also Sunday but Monday turned cold and in the evening it was bitterly cold. I had to go to a committee meeting and was glad of my overcoat. February is generally our coldest month but it has not been so this year so far. I notice that in the Transvaal they have had terrible weather. In one place, hail stones were as large as coconuts. Seventeen natives were killed by hail and fifteen inches of rain was registered in as many minutes. We don't get 15 inches in a year here.

Last Thursday evening we had our Town Council meeting after which I met Rev Douglas at eleven. It was very nice having him in the home for a few days. He went out with Aunt Jessie in the afternoon to spend the time with Uncle Herbert and have service at Fish River on Sunday morning. Uncle Gervase and Aunt Jessie took him to see Uncle Walter and Grass Ridge and the Saunders at Highlands on Saturday. After service on Sunday, Uncle Gervase and Iris brought him back to us. He took the evening service and sacrament. Uncle Gervase and Iris went back afterwards. Monday I took him round to see some of his old friends and they were pleased to see him. He is really wonderful. He was eighty-two last month and is as fresh and active as a man of 50. He left for Middleburg on Tuesday morning.

Rev and Mrs Jennings write to say they look to arrive by car on Thursday afternoon.

You will be sorry to hear that Frank Biggs, Florrie's husband, has had a nervous breakdown. They have gone to Cape Town for a change and we hope he will soon be better. Ernest had an accident going to Fish River last week. His break jammed and the car left the road and turned over on its side. No one was hurt and he came back again. It happened just at Marlow.

Our boy John left on 29<sup>th</sup>. We have the wash girl doing for us at present. We have not started having meals sent across to us yet. Mom does not seem to care for the idea so shall do the best we can otherwise.

We have not made any plans for Easter. Evelyn writes that the three big children are keen on going home to help with the house building. I can quite see them being interested in the operations.

Joe and Blodwen went to Kroonstad for the weekend to attend the wedding of one of Mrs Webb's daughters. They report all well.

I am glad to say we are both keeping pretty well. Mom had a backache for a while but that appears to be better now.

Much love to all as though named,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
February 12th, 1936

My dear All,

News is scarce this week. We have not had any visitors staying with us and nothing of special general interest seems to have happened.

Our servant difficulties seem to have settled themselves by employing the wash girl to do the general housework as well. She seems able to do what cooking is necessary for our small requirements in a satisfactory manner. She is quick in her movements and punctual in the mornings. I still rise at six to let her in after which I generally try to do some reading and writing. Of course I listen in to the news at seven and at 1.10 pm and 7.45 pm. We miss John for water-leading and rough work. We have not seen him since the end of last month.

Grace has suggested that we try to get Trixie Hudson to come and stay with us. She would be very useful in driving the car, reading to me and would be like a daughter in the home. It would mean giving up our spare room and the matter of remuneration would also have to be considered. Aunt Jessie, I think, pays Iris four or five pounds a month. We do not know if Trixie would like it. She no doubt wants to be on her own. We know her so well that it would be very nice from many points of view. We understand she wants to go to England. We do not know if she is still employed by Mrs Rodgers. The last we heard was that she was recuperating at Hermanus. Perhaps Douglas and Dot could talk the matter over with Reg whilst you are together. We have not looked into the matter at all definitely but think it is worth considering.

Mom has been troubled with pains behind the shoulders latterly. Probably it is indigestion. I hope it will yield to treatment.

On Thursday afternoon Rev and Mrs Jennings arrived by car from Cape Town. They came via Graaff Reinet where they saw Rev and Mrs Legg. Mom and I were at the Parsonage when they arrived and stayed and had a cup of tea with them. Mrs Jennings is far from strong but I think the change here will do her good. I hope so at any rate. It is nice to be able to talk over the old days- and associations of Vryburg. We are having a welcome reception to them and the ex-President of the conference tomorrow evening. Now we hear that the President of the conference is coming on 25th so that means arranging for another meeting. He is only spending one evening here. Rev Jennings lived next door to him in Kroonstad and of course Grace and Ted know him very well.

Last evening Mom and Mary went to the new bioscope which has just been opened. We heard that the film was so very good. I went to fetch them after attending a Toc H meeting. The singing of the lady in the piece was the great attraction but I was thankful that my wife has not got such a voice. Of course I could not see much of the picture nor could I enjoy the talking of the actors. This is my second and probably my last visit to a local bioscope.

Mr Cursons gave a very interesting talk at Toc H on his recent trip to England. He was much impressed by Friends House and Jordan's meeting house. The scenery in England was very grand. It certainly makes one long to revisit the land of my birth.

We are beginning to eat our grapes. They are ripening fast so also are the figs. The grapefruit tree is very heavily laden but of course the fruit will not be ripe before the winter. We are needing rain very badly.

Dinner time, Aunt Jessie came in this morning and just as we had begun our dinner, Iris and her husband and two children turned up so we got them a scratch dinner and they were soon off again to Molteno. They left Grahamstown this morning. They had had a very hot journey so far and it looks as though it will be hotter this afternoon. They report Ruth is looking much better but Mrs Brown is far from well and is causing them some anxiety. I think today is the first time that we have not received any post from any of the family. A parcel arrived from Grace and a letter from her to be readdressed to Ruth. Perhaps we shall be more fortunate tomorrow.

Much love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1936

My Dear All,

For the first time in our history we did not receive any letters from any of our children. We do so appreciate getting news of you all at least once a week but we realise that there may be occasions when it is not possible to write. We excuse you and trust that sickness or accidents were not the cause of your silence. This week we have heard from Dot that they have had a very jolly holiday so far and are looking to start their return trip home on Thursday. We hope to hear of their safe arrival in due course. Dot enclosed a skeleton plan of the situation of Douglas' new home and a plan of the house. It is all very interesting and we are able to picture them much better than before. We shall hope to see the surroundings one of these days.

We have not discussed any plans for holidays this year. Possibly we shall stay at home. It is generally pretty cold travelling in winter time. I should like to do the Game Reserve again but my failing eyesight renders the possibility of not being able to see anything of the game decides me putting it off for another year. We want to go over to Graaff Reinet and Louisvale some time and the winter or spring are the best time for that as the summer is far too hot in either of those places. However, we shall see as a way opens.

We had a very successful social last Thursday when the ex President of the conference visited Cradock. We also took the opportunity of welcoming Rev and Mrs Jennings. Rev Goodwin stayed over till Monday morning. I went out with him to Fish River for service on Sunday morning. (One of the members of the congregation drove his car.) We had dinner at Uncle Herbert's as usual and came back in time for him to conduct two more services in the location in the afternoon and the English service in the evening. Mom did not go so she had dinner with the Jennings. Now we are arranging for a visit of only one day's duration of the President, Rev Stanton. He arrives next Tuesday. The following Sunday is Harvest Festival.

We had lovely rain on Sunday night and again on Monday morning. The kitchen chimney leaks a good deal but that has been seen to so hope it will not occur again. Our grapes are getting ripe but they are very small. We have had some figs but not very many.

Good Friday falls on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Has anyone any suggestions to make?

I have been busy for some time answering Xmas letters and have nearly completed that task. I had a larger number of such this year than ever.

Aunt Eliza is expecting Eric and his little boy for the weekend. They are to have dinner with us.

Ernest's son, Guy, has obtained the Metcalf bursary and is proceeding to Rhodes University at the end of the month. He has done exceedingly well at the high school there. Uncle Gervase's Roslin has also won the Uitenhage bursary and is also going to the same University.

Letters from Grace and Blodwen to hand this morning, both report all well. Blodwen is looking to go to Cape Town shortly to see the new house her other has purchased at Plumstead.

Much love to all from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 1936

My Dear All,

I have been taking to making notes of items which I think may be of interest to one or another of you during the week. Consequently, my letters are getting less and less of the nature of a letter but more as "gleanings" in the columns of a newspaper. My memory is not as good as it was and I find that unless I do make notes of things just when they occur to me, they are lost. Please accept my apologies if such are needed.

At one of our church socials recently, a young lady came up to me and asked if I was from Vryburg. Her face seemed familiar but with my usual forgetfulness for names, I did not recognise her. It was no other than Ida Wimble with whom you children used to play. She is married and has such a sweet little boy. Her husband, Mr Rix, is in the Land Bank and has recently been transferred here from Pretoria. She is very pretty, if I may say so and seems so pleased to see us. At present her mother-in-law is staying with her. She knows Ruth as her husband is recently retired from the Postmastership of Grahamstown. She has promised to look Ruth up when she returns there soon.

She says her mother is living with her brothers in Pretoria. They are coming to morning tea tomorrow so may have more news to tell about her.

Eric Fear turned up on Saturday by car and reports that Beryl has been dangerously ill in Middelburg hospital. She is still there but had an operation on her neck on Monday morning. We have not had any later news. Eric bought my five air wheels and has had them fitted to his car. He is pleased with them and I am glad to have turned them into cash.

Honor Biggs from Louisvale also spent the weekend at the Polars on her way to Grahamstown University. She had tea with us one morning. She reports all well in that part of the country.

I understand there is to be a big family reunion of Uncle James' family at Vrede (Graaff Reinet) during the September holidays in honour of Aunt Letty's eightieth birthday.

Rev Jennings has decided to go to Vryburg, or rather Tiger Kloof by car on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March. I have offered to go with him to open gates and incidentally to have a look at Douglas and Family in their new home. I hope it will be convenient for Douglas to meet me. We hope to do the four hundred miles in one day. We have to be back here by the end of the week for Sunday service. Eric thinks Uncle Owen or Leslie might like to go with us and Mr Jennings says he will be glad if he does, as he could help with the driving. By the way, many happy returns of tomorrow, 27<sup>th</sup>, to Evelyn on her 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary. May her shadow never grow less. It will be Fish River service on 15<sup>th</sup> so I will take Mom there as Mr Jennings wants me to go to introduce him to the folk and Mom can stay there until we return. Unfortunately it will be the Cradock show week but I cannot help that.

Rev Stanton arrived on Monday evening instead of Tuesday morning. We did not know of the altered plans and consequently no one was at the station to meet him. He came to the parsonage where it so happened that Mom, Mary, Ernest and I were there. He is staying over till Friday morning when Mr Jennings will motor him as far as Debenek, beyond Alice, as he has to be in King William's Town that day. I expect I shall go with him for company. Last evening was the SS prize-giving. Unfortunately it was wet so the attendance of parents was not as good as expected. We had a nice time all the same. Whilst Mom was at her women's meeting on Monday afternoon, I had the job of entertaining three lady callers, Mrs Lidbetter, Mrs Short and the Mayoress, Mrs de Kock (Dossie Dennison's sister-in-law). Mom came before they left. I must not start another sheet this week as I shall not have time to finish it and I do not like sending clean paper Goodbye, lots of love to all,

Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

It is nearly 3 pm and I am only now starting my letter. I generally try to start writing before breakfast but somehow or other I seem to be getting less time than ever. Sometimes I think I had better stop writing but then one and another seem to think they will miss my contributions and so I keep on.

First of all, let me say that my trip to Vryburg on 16<sup>th</sup> is "off" as we have heard from Douglas that he has gone to Cape Town (arrived there yesterday) and intends coming here for a few days on his way back to Brandfort where Evelyn is at present. It is now probably that Rev Jennings will not go as I have offered to open the gates for him. However that does not matter as it will be a real pleasure to see Douglas here. I do not suppose it will be before next week as he says he has a good deal of business to do in Cape Town. We hope he will not be in too great a hurry to get away again from here.

Then Blodwen writes that she is leaving for Cape Town on Saturday. She has not been very well lately. Hay fever has been troubling her, also asthma. I wonder how coast conditions will agree with her. She looks to come back via Port Elizabeth and spend some time with us. It will be nice to see her and the two children again. We shall be able to make them more comfortable than last time now that we have another room. Joe, too, we hope will be able to come some time. He talks of taking a run up to Vryburg whilst Blodwen is away.

Ruth writes that Denis has been in dry dock for a fortnight with yellow jaundice but is now back at school. She is taking up bowls so I am lending her my set of woods and hope the exercise will do her good.

Letters came this morning from Grace and Dot, both report all well.

Last Friday, Rev Jennings motored Rev Stanton (President of the Conference), Mr Radford and myself to Debenek. We left here at five past six and covered 130 miles there and 130 back in just seven hours actual travelling. We went right through Bedford, Adelaide, Fort Beaufort, Alice without stopping. It was very pretty going over Daggaboer Nek in the early morning above the mists but it lowered our time as one could not travel very fast. We had breakfast at Debenek and after an hour's stop, were on the road back. We left the President there to be called for by someone from King Williams Town.

Am glad to say that the latest news re Beryl is that she seems to be on the mend but is still in hospital.

I notice an article by Ruth in the East Province Herald recently. It is quite interesting and does her great credit. She has sent quite a number to different publications recently.

Mr Sellers, organist of the church, who lives next door to us, has kindly offered to read to me for an hour each day. He comes in from nine to ten in the morning. Miss Heathcote still comes for half an hour from 7 pm. This is a great help as it is increasingly difficult to read for myself.

We had a number of friends and neighbours in on Sunday afternoon to hear the King's speech. It came over very well except for a little "fading" now and then. We all rose whilst God Save the King was played. We could not help thinking how wonderful the occasion was. No doubt all the family here and relations overseas were hearing the same voice. Truly we are living in a most wonderful age.

We have had some nice showers lately and the garden has not had to be watered for some days. It is now nearly dark at six when I get up. Soon I shall have to dress by artificial light. The evenings too are drawing in.

Perhaps Douglas will be here for the Cradock Show on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. He will see a number of relations if he does.

I find I am just about the end of my page and as I have others to write to, must stop and must say goodbye for this week. Much love to all, Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My dear All,

We have had a nice rain the last few days and everything is looking fresher. It is still very close and muggy. The rain is very welcome as it will save watering the garden for a day or two. On Monday afternoon we received a wire from Douglas saying he was leaving Cape Town that evening so will be arriving in a few hours time. I am writing this on Tuesday afternoon so as to have as much time free after he arrives.

We do not know yet how long he intends staying so cannot make any plans.

Blodwen wants me to correct an error I made in my last letter. She has not got asthma, I am glad to say, and she hopes, and so do we all, that the change to the coast will not aggravate her trouble. It is to be hoped she had a more comfortable journey down than Grace and her children had on their return to Kroonstad. We have suggested to Joe that he should come and see us whilst Douglas is here. There has not been time to get a reply. We have also asked Evelyn if she will not come too. Rev Jennings has very kindly offered to meet Douglas with his car. He is preaching at Fish River on Sunday. Perhaps we shall all go out there. Clifford Saunders was in a few days ago and said he would so much like to see Douglas again. His father has had another heart attack and the doctor says he might go off at any time. We should also like him to see Jack Withers who was at Grass Ridge whilst Douglas was at Fish River. He was in the car with me a few days ago attending a funeral and expressed the wish.

Aunt Emmie says she notices my typing reflects that my eyes are getting worse. I am sorry but I do the best I can under difficult circumstances. She kindly offers to make arrangements for me if I decide to go to Cape Town. I have not decided anything so far as the future is concerned.

Wednesday, 6.30 pm. Douglas arrived a few minutes late last evening and we sat and chatted till about 11.30. He reports rain having fallen almost all the way from Cape Town. Mrs Rodger and Trixie are returning to Vryburg early next month. Trixie does not see her way to coming to us and we could not afford to pay her what she is at present earning. Douglas wants to be off again by the end of the week or Sunday as he has to get back to the farm and see to drilling etc. He goes to Brandfort to pick up Evelyn first and will spend a day in Kimberley to see the children.

The latest news regarding Beryl is that she is still in hospital but seems to be improving. Frank Biggs is also reported to be getting better.

At last I have finished answering all my Xmas letters and I think my ordinary correspondence is up to date. I hope to keep it so. There are lots of jobs I still want to do, such as sorting out my collection of photographs.

As we shall be going about with Douglas, I must cut my letter short so as to have as much time with him as possible.

Thanks to everyone for letters received. Hope you are all well. We have not got our post today so have nothing to answer. We are thinking of taking a run up to Middelburg to see Beryl and Rooispruit folk but don't know if it will come off.

Much love from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My dear All,

Douglas has been and gone again and Darby and Joan are alone once more. It has been very nice having him but the visit was all too short. It was better than nothing and we must look forward to a longer one some time. We crowded a good deal into the few days he was here. We did a good deal of phoning on Tuesday making arrangements to visit some of the friends and relations the following day. Of course he saw Aunt Eliza, Ernest, Alison, Mary and many others.

Wednesday afternoon we motored to see Jack Withers who went to the front with him in 1914. He is farming about 20 miles south of Cradock. They were both pleased to meet and talk over old experiences. A neighbour was at the farm at the time who is Uncle to the young man Wainwright who is working for Douglas. From there we motored back nearer to town to see Mr and Mrs Dodd and Nessie. Here we met a number of relations and others who were attending a British Israel meeting addressed by Rev Heath. George and Hilda Collett were also attending this meeting so it was a sort of Vryburg Reunion. Mrs Mahon and her son were also there. We visited George and Hilda on their farm as well as seeing them at Dodds so we did quite a good round that afternoon. Everyone was very pleased to see Douglas.

On Thursday morning we motored to Middelburg to see Beryl who had written saying she would like to see Douglas if anywhere near. She was still in hospital and sitting on the stoep. She has suffered terrible pain, her neck is drawn to one side and she has abscesses on her neck and elsewhere which are constantly discharging. She was very bright, poor girl.

Uncle Owen was there as well so we motored him out to Rooispruit. Freda and Leslie's wife were in town but soon returned. Aunt Kate told me that had it not been for Freda being in the house when Beryl was so ill, she would probably have passed away. She posted Eric off in haste one night for the Doctor who arrived just in time. All pain had left her and her pulse was almost gone. They think she is now on the mend and I hope so too. We had dinner at Rooispruit and after resting a while, left for Grass Ridge. I should have said that Uncle Owen is suffering from a broken rib. He fell over a spade. Doctor fixed him up with a strong adhesive bandage but after a few days, Uncle took it off as he thinks he will get better without any treatment. We arrived at Grass Ridge about six pm. We spent a very pleasant evening with Uncle Dudley and Kate.

After breakfast we motored up to see the Saunders at Highlands. The old folk were very hearty as usual. Clifford and Douglas enjoyed each other's company. We noticed that both the old folk are getting more feeble and have to take great care of themselves. Neither of their daughters are at home at present. After dinner we went on to Uncle Norman's for afternoon tea. We did not stop long as we were due at Saltpansdrift for supper. Uncle Norman wants Douglas to purchase a bull for him at the sale at Vryburg this week if he can get it at his price. Douglas saw Uncle Herbert when he was down for the Rooispruit wedding in November. There is not much to report so far as HJC is concerned. I am writing to his doctor giving him the usual three months report on his health. We got back to town about nine pm after a very pleasant trip. Douglas speaks well of the car. We covered about 300 miles during his visit. I could easily fill another sheet but it is getting late so will add more next time. Douglas left us on Saturday night by the express for Bloemfontein where Joe was to meet him and take him on to Brandfort. We have not heard of his arrival but expect he and Evelyn are safe home at the farm by now. Mom and I are thinking of going to P.E. for a weekend to consult the eye man and ear specialist as Mom is getting very deaf. This may be on 27<sup>th</sup> but am not certain.

We are expecting Blodwen to return home this way but no date is fixed yet. We are hoping to hear that Joe may be coming to meet her.

Much love from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My dear All,

Will you please let me know when the copy of my letters are too feint to be read with comfort. The quality of carbon paper that I use is expensive but it is useless sending letters if they cannot be read.

I was not able last week to finish my letter respecting Douglas' visit. We should have liked him to stay longer but he is such a man of many activities that he could not spare more time. He left by the fast train on Saturday evening for Bloemfontein, having arranged by wire with Joe to meet him on Sunday morning and motor him to Brandfort. We presume that Joe returned the same day to Bloemfontein but have not heard from either of them since. I am writing this on Tuesday morning so perhaps we may hear before posting tomorrow afternoon. Douglas was hoping Joe would go on with him to Vryburg but I do not think he has done so. We see in the Northern that Douglas was in Vryburg last Thursday as he bought a bull at the sale.

I am sorry to say that I have had four days in bed since last Wednesday. I felt that I was getting a cold that day as my nose was running and my throat sore etc. So I turned into bed early that evening and only got up again on Sunday afternoon late. I am not feeling too grand yet but am glad to be able to be about. I missed all the Agricultural show festivities, including the show dinner. Uncles Gervase and Norman were in for it. Uncle Herbert and Aunt Jessie also came in for a few hours. We did not see them. Norman slept here one night and in the evening his four children had supper with us (or rather with Mom). Mom went with Uncle Gervase to the carnival in the evening but did not stay very long. Uncle Gervase wants to borrow my car to go to Uitenhage for the coming weekend and bring up his wife. They are trying to sell their house in Uitenhage as Barbara is now in a situation in Cape Town and Roslin is at Rhodes and they are putting the youngest at boarding school. Perhaps they will buy a farm in this district. We are trying to arrange to go with Uncle as I want to see Dr Stewart regarding my eyes and I want Mom to have her ears tested. If we can manage this, we shall not be so pressed for time as if we went by weekend excursion. We are expecting to hear from Uncle Gervase in the course of a day or so. We want to see Ruth as well either going or coming back. We shall travel via Zuurberg one way and Grahamstown the other. We have suggested to Joe that he should join us but have not heard from him yet.

Later. Have now received a letter from Joe saying he has not made any definite plans as to his holiday. He wants Blodwen to have a good long holiday and talks of going to Vryburg for a week or so and meeting Blodwen here. He is busy preparing some of his fowls for the Bloemfontein Show. According to Blodwen's recent letter, she looks to arrive here on 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> April. We shall be ready for her any time. Our maid was off sick yesterday but is at work again today. This is the first time it has happened since she came to us. She is working very well indeed – does the washing as well as the housework etc. We are enjoying figs and grapes from our garden. We get green mealies from Mr Cary.

Last week I was disappointed as both my readers were too busy to come to me. If it were not for the wireless, I do not know what I should do for news.

As I have practically filled this sheet and in view of other work, I may as well post this today instead of waiting for tomorrow. Hope we shall have good news of you all. Will advise you by postcard of any development re our movements. The news re Frank Biggs is not at all good. No fresh news re Beryl.

Much love to you all  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936

My dear All,

The first quarter of the year has passed and we shall soon be thinking of Xmas. It is dreadful the rate at which time is passing from us. It behoves us to make the best use we can of it.

What a red letter day March 31<sup>st</sup> is to our family. Two marriages and one birthday. David was ten and Reg and Dot and Joe and Blodwen's wedding days. Congratulations to all concerned and may they all be spared to see many more anniversaries. Then it is Cecily's birthday tomorrow.

The events of the past week seem to be quite insignificant so far as we are concerned. We have been favoured with good news from each home, for which we are thankful. Douglas and Evelyn write that they arrived safely back at the farm and took Gwen with them. As they do not mention the children, I expect they did not go via Kimberley as it was so near the holidays. By now they are all at home. They report five and a half inches of rain during the 24 hours on Sunday before they reached home. All spruits were running. All the walls of the new house were completed and no doubt by now the roof is on. Yet they reckon it will take three months still to complete the building. No doubt it will be something to see when it is finished. Grace and Ted report all well in their home. Ted is due for his holiday this month but no definite plans for a change seem to be made. He is welcome here at any time. Cases of whooping cough are in their neighbourhood and they hope the children will escape. Dot reports a very serious accident to their neighbours, Mr and Mrs Beaton. Whilst motoring, the car skidded and overturned pinning both of them under it. Fortunately a passing car assisted and released them but both were seriously injured but are making good progress. Mrs Hudson Sr is still with them but I expect she has returned by now as one of the boys was going up to fetch her. We are sorry to report that Ruth has been unwell again and her mother's health is causing anxiety. Ruth has had to stop her writing for a time but is looking to take a temporary position this month. Denis is to spend the short holiday with his friend Champion, in Bloemfontein. We are looking to see them on Friday as we pass through Grahamstown. Blodwen is in Port Elizabeth – was due to arrive there yesterday afternoon. She is staying with her sister. Joe is due here on Friday morning when he will motor us to Grahamstown where we probably shall spend the night and then onto P.E. on Saturday morning. I don't think Joe has ever been in Grahamstown so we may as well take the opportunity of seeing something of its beauty whilst there. We may spend a week in P.E. but that will depend on circumstances. Of course we shall look to see Una and other friends. Am making an appointment with Dr Stewart about my eyes. Mom had hers tested yesterday here and her glasses do not seem to be improvable. Joe will drive the car back with me and perhaps Roy whilst Mom returns with Blodwen by train.

It is Ernest's daughter Joan's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday today and Mom and I are to have morning tea with them.

Later. I have not time to add more except to say that my address will be c/o Miss Mattisson, 24 Pearson Street, Port Elizabeth. I anticipate being away at least a week – possibly ten days – it will depend upon weather conditions etc. If necessary, wire too but are leaving instructions for post to be sent on as usual. We are both well.

Much love to all  
Dad

24 Pearson Street  
Port Elizabeth  
April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My dear All,

It is Monday morning 8<sup>th</sup> and I have to see Dr Stewart, the oculist at ten thirty and I do not know in what condition my eyes may be in after he has tested them so I thought it best to do some writing before I go to see him.

I think I posted to you as usual last Wednesday. On Thursday the church quarterly meeting was held in the evening when the important subject of the Union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in South Africa was discussed. Suffice it to say the meeting was unanimous in agreeing to the principle of Union. It is expected that it will be some years before all the formalities which have to be agreed to are finally passed.

Joe arrived in Cradock by train on Friday morning. He had breakfast on the train so there was no delay in making a start for Grahamstown. We were off exactly by ten. The road was in good order but the weather was cool as rain had recently fallen. Joe was struck by the beauty of the hills as compared with the eternal flat country of the Free State. We did not go into Bedford or pass through any town until reaching Grahamstown. We stopped for refreshments which we had with us but as the weather was so cold, we had it inside the car. Joe is very pleased with the car and says it travels well and is easy to drive. We reached Grahamstown about three. Found Ruth and Mrs Brown napping. They had very kindly arranged accommodation within a few doors of their home so we saw a good deal of each other. Joe shared Denis' room and had meals with them whilst Mom and I went to a neighbour's and were quite comfortable. Strange to say, a lady who is staying there, a Miss Smith, knew Uncle Walter as her sister was governess there some years ago and she spent a holiday at Groenkloof.

I am glad to say that we found Mrs Brown in better health than we expected. At times she is not able to sleep at all well and that naturally is a great handicap. Ruth was looking much better than I saw her in P.E. last September. Denis is full of vigour and played his first game of football that afternoon. We took Ruth with us to watch the game for a while and then went to a florist and Mom purchased some bulbs which will be sent up after we return to Cradock.

We left Grahamstown at 9.30 am. We were delighted with the scenery, neither of us having travelled by road over this piece of country. It is very undulating and reminded us of Western Province in some places. The road was not so good as some we had passed over but not too bad. We halted along the road and enjoyed refreshments, kindly provided by Ruth. The last few miles into Port Elizabeth are very uninteresting, being composed of flats along the sea coast without any outlook on either side. This part of the road is tarred and it did not take us long to get over it. Blodwen had previously written to say that her sister had taken a furnished house near where she had lived when I was here last year. We therefore made for her place first as we did not know what accommodation they might have for Joe. Fortunately it is a large house with a garage attached. Blodwen was expecting us and had phoned to the boarding house where I had booked for ourselves to enquire when to expect us. Needless to say, Blodwen and the children were pleased to see their Daddy. After a refreshing cup of tea, we were soon settled in our quarters and ready for lunch. The proprietress is an old Vryburg resident whom we knew very well and she has given us a very nice large room just opposite the main building. She has about 40 boarders. We have a small balcony to ourselves and I am writing this in a small writing room adjoining our bedroom. Our room is very large and comfortably furnished, the charge being 7/6 per day each. Ruth and Denis stayed here when they were down at Xmas. Blodwen's sister, Mrs Merrifield, is much better than when I saw her last. She is taking a diet scale which has reduced her weight considerably. Her little boy is not very well but the baby is doing splendidly. In the afternoon we went to the docks to see Mrs Kissick and Agnes Williams off by boat to England. We also went to Humewood for a spin. In the evening we went to see Blodwen and her sister's home and spent a very pleasant time together. It is very convenient having the car here and Joe fetches us wherever we want to go. Sunday Mom and I went to the Methodist Church nearby

and in the afternoon we went to see Una and had afternoon tea with her. We also called to see Mrs Bowers with whom I stayed when Uncle Herbert was in hospital. In the evening Mom and I went to Friends meeting at Mr and Mrs Addis Smith's house at Walmer. Mr Hemming was there also. Mrs Hemming is at home at present but is suffering a good deal. I think she will go back to the hospital now that the holidays are over.

I had made an appointment with Dr Stewart for ten thirty this morning and I am writing the whole of this page after having been in his hands. I am considerably handicapped in doing this as the drops he has put into my eyes makes it almost impossible to see the keys. I feel, however, that I must finish as soon as possible as he had advised me to have an operation at once on the worst eye. He says (what I already knew) that my best eye is much worse than six months ago and the left eye is practically useless. He says it will be safest to do the operation in two stages. The first one will only necessitate my being in hospital for about four days. Then in a month or so I must come again when, if all goes as well as he thinks it will, I shall be able to see with my left eye whilst the right eye need not have attention at all. It will get practically useless but one eye will, he thinks, give me all the sight I shall need. I hope it may be so. However, I have decided to have the first done now. We have been to the Provincial Hospital and I am to go in tomorrow (Tuesday afternoon) and the operation will be performed about 8.30 Wednesday morning. He thinks I shall be able to come out on Sunday. So that's that. I am afraid, from what he says, I shall not be able to see as well as I do now for some time but when the second operation is done, I should be able to see clearly.

We are looking to go to Uitenhage tomorrow morning to see Uncle Gervase and Aunt Rouena.

So I will say goodbye for the present. I hope to be able to continue my typing next week but if you do not hear from me, do not be alarmed. We shall look to go back to Cradock about Tuesday.

Much love to each and all and asking to be excused for all the mistakes which I know this letter must be full of.

Yours affectionately  
Dad

Mom and Joe will be able to come and see me each afternoon and evening. I am not having a private ward as that would be so lonely.

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My dear All,

I do not know how I am going to get on with my typing today but I am going to try. My left eye is covered over and I have not got my glasses on. However, I shall do my best. It will be slow work until I get used to it. I must try to retrace my steps for the past ten days or so. Joe arrived on Friday morning 3<sup>rd</sup> and we were off by ten by car for Grahamstown, arriving there about three. It was a cold day but quite nice for motoring. Mrs Brown and Denis all seemed well. I cannot go into all the details of what we did as time will not permit with slow typing. Suffice it to say we enjoyed our visit and I am glad to know that prospects are looking brighter with Ruth than they have been for some time. I hope the prospects will materialise.

We arrived in P.E. about noon on Saturday and found Blodwen and the children well, also her sister and family. Joe and the car were able to stay with us which was a great convenience. Mom and I stayed in Person Street as arranged. On Monday morning we had an interview with the two brothers, Dr Stewart who agreed that an operation on my worst eye was desirable as it was practically useless. We therefore decided that as the first part of the operation would only involve my staying in bed for a few days and as Joe was able to motor us back, it would be best to have it done at once. We spent Tuesday morning at Uncle Gervase's at Uitenhage and I entered the hospital about four the same afternoon. This is my first experience in 72 years of being a patient in a hospital.

It was a six bedded ward. I preferred a general ward as a private one would have been so lonely. It is a very nice place and the nurses exceedingly kind and attentive. The op was performed about 8.30 Wednesday morning. I was greatly amused on entering the hospital in a sort of invalid's wheelbarrow to the ward. I was quite capable of walking. The op was performed downstairs and I was taken there on the wheeled stretcher. The op was practically painless. No chloroform was given. A few drops were placed in the eye and I was told to look down. A small incision was then made – which they call a window – and the eye was then carefully bandaged and remained so for a couple of days. I was told to lie perfectly still, on my back for four or five days. After two days in this position, I was allowed to get on my side – partly because I snored – and also to give me some additional comfort. It is an ordeal to lie still for any length of time on one's back. I was not allowed to sit up for meals or drink. The time did not drag as much as I expected. At five am the nurses start washing patients, then early coffee, then temperatures and pulse registrations, then breakfast about 7.30. Beds are then straightened, ward swept and so it goes on all day long, something has to be done. The nurses are constantly on the run attending to one and another and are pleased to do anything for one. Visitors are allowed from 2 to 3 and 7 to 7.30 daily. Mom, Joe and Blodwen came daily and on Friday, Una and Mr Shingler and Mr Carter and another local preacher also came. On Saturday morning I was allowed to sit up in bed to have my breakfast and Dr, who had seen my eye which of course was kept bandaged, said I could go and come back in about a month's time for the second stage of the op. This will consist of extracting the cataract through the "window" they have made. It will be more severe than the first and will involve both eyes being bandaged for ten days and to remain perfectly still for that period on my back. Only one low pillow will be allowed. A patient in the same ward was going through this period. He had to drink through a tube. The Sister in charge of the ward has promised me a Vi-spring mattress to lie on, which will be a great comfort. I am trying to find something to do with my fingers during this period. Unfortunately they haven't the wireless at the hospital. Drs feel sure that when this op is over, I shall have such improved sight that it will not be necessary to operate on the other. I hope this may be so. At present the well eye is of very little use for reading even with the magnifying glass which Uncle Joe gave me some years ago.



We have not made any plans for the future but expect Mom and I will go down again in about a month's time and have it done. It has been suggested that I take my wireless down but I do not want to do that as it is very heavy and might easily get damaged. I will write to P.E. and see if I cannot get the loan of one there.

Just the last thing on Saturday, Mom went to see the ear specialist and I am glad to say that he finds that she is not deaf at all. The ear which she thought was quite deaf is fairly good. He says that no electrical instrument would be of any use to her. He also says that her nose and throat are in good order. This was well worth the trip to P.E.

We had a very nice trip back. Joe drove the car with Mom and I and Roy. We left P.E. about nine and travelled via Uitenhage to see Uncle Gervase and Aunt Rouena. They have sold their house there and may be coming to farm in the Midlands again. Blodwen and Merle and a nurse girl came up by train and arrived here on Tuesday morning. They look to leave here by the express on Saturday evening, arriving home on Sunday morning.

I do not know what we should have done without Joe and the car. He was able to take them about a good deal whilst I was in hospital. They saw a good deal of Una and went to a number of places of interest round about P.E.

I must not forget to thank all of you for your kind letters and telegrams received here and at P.E.

I had been lead to understand that the operation would have involved a great deal more discomfort than it did. I was told that in former days patients had their hands strapped to the bed and the patient was kept in a dark room for some weeks. It is true that I shall have both eyes bandaged for ten days or more but the prospect of being able to see again is well worth it.

Later. Mrs Jennings and her daughter Enid have been here to morning tea. They tell of Peggy Smith's wedding last Monday at Tiger Kloof. It appears that the bridegroom met with a nasty motor accident on his way from Kimberley to Tiger Kloof. Some ribs were broken and instead of being married in the church, the wedding was solemnised at his bedside. Two letters came from Dot this morning and one from Grace. I must not attempt to reply to same now as I am told to stop as it is a strain on my one eye. All of Grace's children have whooping cough and I hope they will soon be better. Mr Hudson Snr appears to be at Potgietersrus. My kind regards to all and again thanks for all your letters.

Yours with love to all,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am glad to be able to write to you again. My eyes are about the same as last week. You still have to put some stuff in the operated eye each morning which makes it smart a bit but I keep the eye covered when I am in the sunlight. When I am indoors, I use my old sun shield that I used to wear when I played tennis. I manage to get about quite alright but one and another think that I should always have someone with me. It is difficult to see traffic in crossing streets etc.

Joe and Blodwen left on Saturday night and we have had a postcard from Blodwen saying they had a comfortable journey and found all well. They went on a trip round Fish River for a day and have met quite a number of friends.

Mr and Mrs Dodd called, also Cyril Brown. It was very nice to see old friends. We had an interesting letter from Bernie Browne from Knysna the day they called. He has had to give up his job in Rhodesia for a year on account of his health.

Joe thinks it necessary that one of the sons should be with us at P.E. when I have the second operation done. Personally I do not see that it is really so necessary for anyone to go with me as I now know what is before me. Of course I shall appreciate company and Mom will certainly come for a time at any rate. We discussed the matter and so far as we can see at present, it looks as though it will be most convenient for all concerned if Joe really feels that he should come, for him to leave Bloemfontein on Thursday night, May 21<sup>st</sup> (a public holiday) and Mom and I catch the same train here on Friday morning, arriving at P.E. the same morning and Joe could return to Bloemfontein by the Sunday night train arriving back in Bloemfontein on Monday night. Monday is also a public holiday so he would only lose Friday and half day Saturday. It is very good of him to offer in this way. We want to be at Fish River fete on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Monday and yesterday were pretty full days with Council committees. They are all very interesting.

Aunt Emmie is contemplating paying a visit to Cradock so as to avoid the Cape Town winter. Nothing is decided yet but we hope it may come off.

Letters to hand today from Grace and Blodwen tell of impending changes. Grace says they have sold the Plot and the buyer wants to take delivery in June. She does not mention the price but I hope they have cleared the cost of the property. They look to go to the South Coast of Natal for a time so as to hasten the clearing up of the effects of whooping cough. I wonder if it will mean a transfer for Ted in the near future. We shall await further news in due course.

Blodwen writes that she has had another attack of chest trouble and they have decided to move back into Bloemfontein as soon as possible. She was quite well at the Cape and Port Elizabeth. Joe's foreman has also been transferred and so perhaps it may mean promotion for him. I hope so.

Dorothy tells of the return of Mrs Hudson and Donald to Vryburg after a two months holiday with them. It has been nice for all concerned.

Aunt Kate Owen writes that her Joyce has been down on a short visit and that Eric is at present in Vryburg district. Uncle Gervase spent a day or so with us and has taken my car to Middelburg as he is looking for a farm, having sold their home in Uitenhage. Beryl is reported as being much better but not right yet. I must not attempt another sheet as I have a number of envelopes to address for the church. Dot wonders if Douglas would be able to go with us to P.E. We had a nice letter from Lynne recently. I saw Denis this morning when he passed through by train to spend his holiday with a school chum near Bloemfontein. He was looking very well.

Much love to all  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am sure you all will be sorry to hear that since I last wrote, two events have happened which have cast a gloom over us. On Friday last quite early I had a phone message saying the Uncle Joe Maskell was not expected to last through that night. Just after nine am, I received another message saying he had passed away about midnight and that the funeral was to be that afternoon at five. This necessitated a good deal of phoning to Fish River and making arrangements to get there. Not being able to drive my car, Fenner Moorcroft kindly took Mom and I as far as Fish River. I joined Uncle Gervase who motored Aunt Jessie and Iris to Dwaal. Mom stayed with Uncle Herbert and Nurse as it was not certain if we would be able to get back the same night. Dwaal is about ninety miles from here but we arrived in good time. Uncle Bertie and wife and Uncle Dudley and wife and Uncle Jack and Hilton went in their own cars but we all met there. There were about 150 to 200 people at the funeral which was conducted by the Methodist minister from Middelburg. All Aunt Rosa's family were there. She bore up splendidly. We left shortly after six and got back to Fish River about ten pm. Mom and I slept there and came back to town by train in the morning.

The same morning (Saturday) Rev Jennings phoned wanting to see me as soon as possible. Mrs Jennings has not enjoyed good health since they have been here. Her blood pressure has been abnormally high. Dr has been treating her but saw her on Friday and advised her removal to the coast at once. As you know, she has always been bright and full of go and has become very much beloved by all. There was nothing else to be done but to carry out the doctor's orders. So it was arranged that she should leave by Monday mornings train for Cape Town. Mr Jennings naturally wants to follow as soon as he can be relieved of his duties. I suggested that instead of going by the early train and having to wait three hours at Naauwpoort, he should go by car to Naauwpoort and we could call at Middelburg and see Rev Douglas if he could come and take Mr Jennings's place for all or part of the remaining three months that Rev Barns is still away. I consequently went with them on Monday leaving here about 9.45. We stopped for morning tea and to say goodbye at Uncle Herbert's. Rev Douglas says he can supply for the whole of June and no doubt we shall be able to make suitable arrangements with the Chairman of the District for all the period. It is probable Mr Jennings will get away just after the Fish River fete on 21<sup>st</sup>. We covered the distance back from Naauwpoort – 100 miles in 2 hours 40 mins. We are all very sorry for this upset as everyone is very fond of both Mr and Mrs Jennings. He is filling the church and doing very good service. All this means a lot of extra organising and work for me and I have tried to hasten forward my operation so as to be as fit as possible for the task. I therefore wrote to Dr Stewart asking if he could not do the second stage this week. He has replied advising waiting till the end of May or later. I now feel inclined to wait until after the Synod in August and am writing to the Dr again asking if this will be too long a delay. I shall be very glad to have it behind me. I have stopped putting the ointment into my eyes as he said I was to do it for a fortnight and that time is passed. Aunt Kate Owen has offered to write to her sister asking her to come and read to me every day whilst in hospital. It is very kind of her to think of me in this way. The hospital has also given me permission to have a wireless set with headphones. Everyone is very kind and thoughtful on my behalf. I greatly appreciate it but am not entitled to all this attention. Joe writes that his boss is agreeable for him taking some days off in order to come with me to P.E. It is very kind indeed but it seems so unnecessary. However, we will see nearer the time. John Shingler says he can hire a set of headphones for me in P.E.

Our grapefruit is ripening nicely. We have a lot of it this year. Would any of you like some for jam making? I do not know if it would be worth the carriage. I notice the leaves are beginning to fall and our figs are just about finished. The grapes are quite finished.

Yesterday we posted 160 circular letters to church members re the Synod and thanksgiving fund. It was my second attempt at cutting a stencil. I find it so difficult to see in typing and arranging the ribbon. Mom helped fold and post them. I have recently purchased a duplicating machine which will be very useful in my work.

Yesterday was Council meeting in the evening which lasted till ten. Mom stayed at Aunt Eliza where I fetched her. This evening we are going to an entertainment in the Town Hall. We have only been to one before since we came back to Cradock. Hope it will be nice.

We are sorry to hear that Aunt Emmie had a funny experience last week. It appears that whilst she was getting ready to go out, she came over quite giddy. She did not lose consciousness but it was evidently a warning which I hope she will take notice of. She is contemplating going to Muriel's at Maritzburg by boat to Durban but says she must first let her house or store her furniture again. We are hoping she will visit Cradock as well. We have invited Mrs Gush to travel with her for company.

I too had a funny experience last Thursday evening. Mom and I went to evening service quite all right. On walking home, I had a sudden terrific pain in my right heel something like cramp but I don't think it was. I think I should have fallen had Mom not been with me. When I got home I had a hot bath and have not felt anything more.

Letters from Grace and Dot this morning. Dot suggests that during my period of enforced blindness, I should cut up wool for a rug mat. Quite a good idea. If anyone will send the wool, I shall be pleased to do it. She also suggests a family gathering at Port Alfred next February.

Grace reports that they have hired a house in Kroonstad from June 1<sup>st</sup> and they are disposing of their cows and poultry. The children were getting over their whooping cough nicely. Ted is on holiday at present.

Joe does not mention when they will be moving back to Bloemfontein but I suppose they cannot do so without giving the usual month's notice.

We have not heard if Eric Fear has got a place up Vryburg way. He was not back when Aunt Kate wrote a few days ago. Beryl is getting better I am glad to say.

We have not used the car for some time. I don't think we have been in it since Joe and Blodwen were here. Joe is thinking of buying it.

We are both keeping well. The weather is nice and we are kept busy. We have no visitors in view at present.

No more now. I have a number of letters to answer but it is so difficult to read them.

Much love from all

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Yesterday was Dot's 31<sup>st</sup> birthday. No doubt you all remembered it. Whilst I think of it, you had better make a note of Grace and Ted's new address as from June 1<sup>st</sup>. It will be Reitz Street, Kroonstad. Joe and Blodwen will be 46 Glen Road, Bloemfontein. I hope both families will be very happy and comfortable in their new abodes.

I expect I mentioned last week that I had written to Dr Stewart regarding the second operation on my left eye. I questioned if it would be safe or advisable to postpone doing it until the pressure of work that is in front of me during the next three months was behind me. I had previously suggested that it be performed at once so as to have it over. He replied that I had better wait till the end of May or later. He now says it will be to my advantage to wait until August. So that settles that question. To my query as to my being likely to be able to drive my car after the op, he says he cannot say. I shall therefore have to be patient and wait and see if I can see. This information will, I hope, remove the necessity of referring to my increasing disabilities from week to week. I shall continue to do the best I can under the circumstances. I am very thankful for the mercies I have and opportunities for service.

You will be interested in knowing that I have engaged a respectable coloured young man as driver. He worked at Moys garage for some years. He is a blacksmith by trade and has driven cars before but did not have a licence. This I have fixed up for him and we have been out calling a few times. He manages very well. I hope this arrangement will be a success. We are thinking of paying a long promised visit to Rev Legg at Graaff Reinet and seeing Aunt Letty at the same time. Aunt Rosa is talking of coming down to visit her brothers and sisters shortly and we may take her over as well. She is bearing her loss very bravely. She has already been to Rooispruit.

You will be sorry to hear that Mrs Jennings has been ordered to keep to her bed for the present. She had been put on a vegetarian diet – no medicine – and must not see any visitors or have any excitement. Dr says he does not know how she lived up country. Her blood pressure has reduced from 270 to 250. Mr Jennings will stay here unless anything happens to hasten his departure earlier until after the Fish River fete on 21<sup>st</sup>. After that Rev Douglas will come for four or five weeks. He is in his eighty-third year and is still very active. He will not undertake visiting etc. but will be a great help in other ways. Rev Barnes is not due back until the first week in August. Synod begins on August 8<sup>th</sup>.

Aunt Agnes' Gladys has to come into hospital this week for operation for appendicitis. This is very unfortunate as her help will be sadly missed at the fete.

I was tempted but did not yield to buy one of the Council's new erven in the new Township last week in Butler Street – named after Uncles James. Had I been 20 years younger, I would have done so. The reserve price was £50. The new township is right on top of the hill at the back of the hospital. Some of them are near Rocklands.

Ruth writes that she has not got satisfaction from the party she joined with over the school readers. It's very disappointing and I fear she has not had a fair deal. Denis is still on holiday near Bloemfontein.

Joe has sold his car and perhaps may buy mine.

The roof is on Douglas new house and there will be great excitement when the children come home for the holiday settling in.

Ted is looking to go to his parents for part of his holiday before they move. All the children are getting better of their coughs.

We have not heard if Aunt Emmie is coming to Cradock. She is trying to let her house furnished. We shall be very pleased to see her.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All

The past week has had some unusual happenings. On Wednesday afternoon, Ernest's Jeffrey was doing gym exercises on a horizontal bar they had erected in the garden at the Poplars and whilst swinging, let go at the wrong moment with the result that he fell heavily to the ground and broke both arms, one just above the wrist and the other higher up towards the elbow. Fortunately Ernest was standing by – also David Biggs and they were able to help and conveyed him to hospital where after some delay, a doctor was found to set the arms. He was able to be removed home after a few days and is now walking about with both arms in a sling. He is bright and is learning how to help himself in various ways. He has indeed been a very unfortunate child. An X-ray photo has been taken and they think both arms will be alright. I hope so.

Then on Friday last, Uncle Jack's daughter Gladys had to come to hospital to have her appendix removed. This was done on Saturday morning. Whilst under chloroform, Dr discovered she had a large tumour on her left side so removed that at the same time. She was miserably sick for some time after but is now sitting up and as bright as a new button. It will be a few months before she can resume her tennis. She is one of the best lady players in the district.

We have had Uncle Gervase and Aunt Rouena staying with us off and on during the week. They are looking about for a suitable place where to settle. They have sold their Uitenhage home and may buy one of the river plots at Scanlen – just below the town. It will be nice to have them near us if it comes off. Last Wednesday afternoon we took the Philipsons nearly to the top of Zuagershoek. I had not been up there since my young days when Capt. Upton and I went over the mountain on our push bikes. It took us three hours to push the machines up and about twenty minutes to come down on the other side. It is a steep climb and the car would do it alright but Mom seemed to get nervous so we turned before reaching the top. It reminded me of the Chapman Peak drive at Cape Town. Another afternoon we went on the Doornhoek Road and called on an English farmer there but the house was all shut up. Our driver is doing very well and understands the car quite well. He looks after it and keeps it clean. We have not heard from Aunt Rosa so have not made any plans about going over to Graaff Reinet.

We are pleased to hear that Aunt Emmie is likely to visit Cradock soon. Her doctor says she may go to Maritzburg and as that is about the same altitude as Cradock, she is going to venture to come here. We do not know if anyone is going to travel with her.

We are having a little function here on Monday evening to say goodbye to Mr Jennings. He has to go to Bloemfontein and Kroonstad before going to Cape Town and wants someone to travel with him. I have offered to go with him to Cape Town if he comes back here after the other places but he will probably go direct. Mrs Jennings is still kept to her bed and he is rather afraid that if he goes down at once, the excitement may be too much for her but on the other hand, he says, he must be ready to go at a moment's notice. We shall all miss him. The congregations have increased and the work has not suffered. Rev Douglas will be arriving for five weeks on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> and the Fish River fete is the previous day. I have just been working out the results of the previous 19 years since the fetes were started and I find the average income to the church has been £180:15:0. I do not know how the church could get on without this effort. Aunt Emmie writes that Rev Titcomb has to give up his work and is probably leaving for England this week. His health has broken down again.

It is nearly breakfast time and the sun has just begun to shine in this room. We are both keeping pretty well. Have not started fires yet but use the electric heater. Many thanks for all letters received. Denis is having another week in Bloemfontein. I went to the station yesterday but he was not there.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Winter has come with a vengeance the last few days. As I am writing at 6 am, sitting with a cardigan and dressing gown and a cap on my head and warm slippers on my feet, it is cold but for all that I am pleased to be able to do it. I have brought our electric hot plate and gadget for boiling the water into the dining room as we find the kitchen is so very cold in the mornings. As we get our own supper, we are adopting the same plan. Mom cannot stand going in and out from the dining room to the kitchen. Our maid does not turn up until about 7.30 am when we like to have our early cup of tea or coffee before seven, it is decidedly nippy. Our maid was ill for three days last weekend which did not make housekeeping any easier but we managed alright. She is back at her duties now again.

We have not had any visitors staying with us since Uncle Gervase and his wife were here last week. We are looking forward to Aunt Emmie coming soon but she does not seem able to decide definitely as Muriel wants her at Maritzburg as her little girl and herself are not well. She is talking of coming up as far as Fish River with Enid but she cannot leave Cape Town until her exams are finished. Aunt Emmie is suffering a great deal from rheumatism at present and has decided to give up her house for the present and store her furniture. We hope the change will do her good.

Mr Jennings has had to hasten his departure from Cradock owing to the fact that the niece with whom Mrs Jennings is staying has to leave for Vryheid at the end of the month. He left on Tuesday morning by car for Cape Town. Mrs Jennings still has to keep in bed. Mom and I went with him in his car on Sunday morning to Fish River for his last service. Everyone in town is sorry that he could not stay longer. We gave him a little farewell in the lounge here on Monday evening and he was presented with a stick etc. Rev Douglas arrives on Friday evening and will stay at the Parsonage for five Sundays. After that a young minister will come for the remainder of the time until Rev Barnes returns about the first week in August. Mr Barnes is having a very nice tour round the world. I wonder if Uncle Willie will see him at Liverpool when he lands on 30<sup>th</sup>. We are going out to the Fish River fete tomorrow morning. I hope it will be fine. It is interesting to know that this will be the 20<sup>th</sup> fete in succession that has been held there and so far they have raised over £3400 (an average of over £180 per annum) for church purposes. They are building a new hall there for public purposes – church, tennis and general or political meetings and dances. Unfortunately it will not be finished for tomorrows use. We had a nice rain on Saturday afternoon and this accounts for the cold since.

We have not heard from Douglas and Evelyn for a long time but suppose they are very busy with arranging the finishing touches of the new house. Grace and family and Joe and family will be moving their homes at the end of the month also. I hope that nothing but pleasant memories will remain with them of their former abodes.

Last Wednesday afternoon we went to see Uncle Bertie's son's home. We have often passed it but never called. They have a very nice place and seem to be doing well with agriculture. We had hoped to call on the man from whom I bought those lovely apples I sent you last year. He phoned to say that this year's crop is a failure. I had intended sending you all a further supply but you must take the will for the deed this time. I think I have written enough to earn my breakfast and I see I have got to about the end of the sheet. Goodbye everybody as the man says on the wireless every night. Hope you are all well and will try to drop us a line at least every week even if it is only a postcard. We do so look forward to letters. I spend a great deal of my time writing as I cannot do hardly any reading. Much love to all as though named individually. It was Alan's birthday yesterday.

Love from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

It is 6.30 am and I have to write against time this morning. I have to be at the station at 7.00 to meet the early train and at 9.15 have to see my dentist to try on the new plate he has taken seven months or more to make for my lower jaw and at 10.15 I am going out to take some ministers to have morning tea with Rev Lionel Fletcher on a farm where he is having a few days rest. He is holding a service in the D.R. Church here tomorrow evening and a man is coming from P.E. this am, to fix up a broadcasting outfit so as to relay his address to the Town Hall as an overflow meeting. We also hope to be able to broadcast it to the Market shed so that the Natives and others may also be able to hear the message.

I am pleased to be able to say that Aunt Emmie is arriving on Saturday evening 10 pm to spend a few days in Cradock before going on to Maritzberg. It has been a long looked for visit and I hope the altitude will not adversely affect her. She is travelling with Enid who has sat for her nursing examination this week. We want her to spend some days and nights with us but Aunt Eliza says she may have her dinners with us only. We shall see.

The Fish River fete last Thursday went off very well. It was a dull morning which kept a number of townsfolk away but I brought back over £130 with me in the car. The total result will be about £160. During the last 20 years in which they have held a fete there, they have raised £3600. I do not know what the church would do without this assistance. We had no minister to do the opening but I introduced Mr Metcalf who did the needful. I had to turn auctioneer for the sale of bucks etc. I sold 25 springboks for £25. On Sunday morning, Mom and I took Rev Douglas to service at Tarka Training farm. We all had dinner at the Dodds, or rather at Nessie's home. Mr Douglas was in Vryburg when the Dodds were there.

Gladys is out of hospital and went home on Monday. She has made a good recovery.

Tomorrow we are having a visit from Rev Lionel Fletcher. I have arranged for his address to be broadcast from the D.R. Church to the Town Later. This morning I have been out with others to have morning tea with him on a farm nearby where he is resting for a few days.

Douglas writes that they are gradually moving into their new house. It will not be completed for some time yet. They were over at Brandfort recently to say goodbye to the Amblers as they are being transferred at the end of the month to Maritzburg. They spent most of last Sunday with Joe and Blodwen in Bloemfontein. I hope the moving of the various families at the end of this month will be accomplished without loss or serious inconvenience.

Frank Biggs appears to be making slow progress towards recovery. We hope it will be permanent.

Alison has had the sad news that her father died recently at the age of 85. He has been ailing for a few months. Jeffrey is getting quite clever in using both of his broken arms. He can do some typewriting and gets on very well.

I wonder if you have suffered at all from the storms that have been raging in various parts of the country. It has been very cold here and we have had fires in our lounge most evenings.

We are expecting Mr and Mrs Harry Collett tomorrow to stay over for Rev Fletcher's meeting. Lizzie or rather Mrs Wilkie is also coming from Steynsburg with six in the car for the same. They will return after the meeting is over. It will mean about 200 miles for them. We have not received your usual letters this week. I suppose Monday being a holiday has upset the postal arrangements.

Much love to all,  
Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I sincerely hope that none of the family have had the experience which befell Rev and Mrs Stanton during the past week. No doubt you saw an account of their journey from Natal to the Free State over the Van Reenan Pass. They were caught in a snow storm. Mrs Stanton was driving and they nearly had to spend the night in the car snowed up. At last help came. We are very sorry for them as Mr Stanton is not at all well and their afflicted son had to be carried and the daughter fainted. I hope they are none the worse now. It has been bitterly cold here some days. Last Saturday registered the lowest maximum temperature recorded since we returned here. It was only 44. The wind was bitterly cold. We felt sorry for Aunt Emmie and Enid who were in the train all day travelling from Cape Town via De Aar. However they say they were quite comfortable. I met Aunt Emmie and she is staying with Aunt Eliza for the present. I am glad to say she is better than I expected and is able to get about as usual. We have the pleasure of her company to dinner daily and hope to take her about a little.

On Monday afternoon we took Mary to Fish River to see Enid and Aunt Jessie. We forgot her birthday last week and as Mary had never been to Retreat, it was a little treat for her. We stayed to supper at Uncle Herbert's and got home about seven. Uncle Gervase and Uncle Bertie and Aunt Annie and May were also there. During the past few days, Uncle has been killing 169 ostriches which he has sold to some trader who is shipping the skins to America where they are converted into ladies handbags. The flesh is converted into biltong and the feathers are also used for dusters or something of the sort. All the work has to be done by the farmer. The heads, necks and bones are buried on the farm. For all this, he only gets one pound per bird. Uncle says he only has about a dozen ostriches left. Uncle Gervase has bought one of Uncle's plots along the river. He will have to build his house etc.

Aunt Emmie is looking to go on to Muriel at Maritzburg soon as Wallis is going to be away for a time making a big map of Natal for the Johannesburg Exhibition. Frieda will probably go with her so as to avoid her travelling alone. Nothing is yet settled about Eric and Frieda going farming in Vryburg but they are hoping matters will be arranged soon.

I must not forget to mention the wonderful meeting we had with Rev Lionel Fletcher in the D.R. Church last Thursday evening. In ten minutes after the doors were opened, about 1500 people were packed into it. The overflow meeting in the Town Hall was also a success. We arranged to have it broadcast from the church. People came from Steynsburg, Middelburg, Tarkastad etc. We had Cousin Harry Collett and his wife and daughter with us for the night. It is on the boards that one of their daughters may come and stay with us so as to help read and write for me. It is getting increasingly difficult to read.

We shall be interested in hearing how the moving has gone on in the various homes. We hope all will be greatly pleased with their new surroundings. Reg and Dot are the only ones not moving. We have cut the oleander tree in front of our bedroom down to about half its height. This makes our room much brighter these winter mornings. Our dining room is very cold. We generally have a fire in the lounge every evening. Last evening we spent at Aunt Eliza's. If Uncle Willie could have been with us, we should have had the complete remaining portion of our generation together. It is Willie's 76<sup>th</sup> birthday this month. Rex and Arthur also have birthdays in June. Mr Seller, who reads to me most mornings, is moving at the end of the month to the other end of the town. I do not know if he will be able to continue his kind services. It is now breakfast time and must away. Later. We must begin to seriously to think about plans for Xmas. Will the family accept our invitation for Port Alfred if I can find suitable accommodation?

Much love to all from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Since writing last week, I have done about 500 miles journey by car. I may have told you last week that Aunt Emmie visited Dr who said the altitude here was too great a strain on her heart and that she should not attempt to go to Maritzberg by train over the Drakensberg. There was therefore no alternative but to go by boat. Instead of going by train, I offered to take her by car. Eric and Freda came in by car with the baby and Pat and discussed the matter as to which or either of them could travel with Aunt as it was not considered desirable for her to go alone. Eventually it was arranged that Freda should go. Eric took Mom as far as Grass Ridge to stay whilst I was away and Ernest's Christine went all the way to Rooispruit to help with baby. She returned by train on Saturday evening. We left by car at 10 am Friday and reached East London about six pm, stopping occasionally for refreshments which Aunt Eliza had bountifully supplied. We all enjoyed the run of 180 miles. Aunt Emmie had never been on such a long car journey. Miss Botha, a friend of Mary's, who has joined Friends showed us kindness by finding a comfortable boarding house where we spent the night. We had an interesting half hour or more with Miss Botha the next morning. She is a teacher and her home is in Kuruman. She said she knew Harold and had visited their home there. One year she motored from East London to Kuruman, a distance of over seven hundred miles in 26 hours. She was at the wheel all the way.

Passengers had to be on board by 11 Saturday morning. The day was bright and fine and we had no difficulty in getting on board from the tug, going up in the basket. This is the first time Freda has been on the sea. They had a very comfortable cabin to themselves and as the sea was calm, no doubt there was no seasickness. We have not yet heard of their arrival at Maritzburg. Wallis is going down to meet them at Durban.

I called on Mrs Rickett before starting on my return home via Peddie and Grahamstown. She was pleased to see me and I her. It was a pretty drive but the road was not so good as we had coming down via Bedford, Alice etc. We took wrong roads twice owing to the absence of signposts. It was dark when we got to Peddie but the Minister there kindly gave us supper and wanted me to stay the night. I phoned through to Ruth that we should be late and arrived shortly after ten pm. I am glad to say Mrs Brown, Ruth and Denis are all looking well. Ruth and Denis may be coming up to visit Hilda and George during the August school holidays when of course we shall have the pleasure of having them here as well. I went with them to the Presbyterian Church in the morning and Ruth, Denis and I went to the Methodist in the evening. Mom listened in to the same service at Graaff Reinet and had good reception. In the afternoon, I had a long talk with the Chairman of the Synod and he seemed pleased with the arrangements I had so far made. We saw Guy, Roslin and Derrick. They were all looking forward to the holidays. Ruth is anxious to have a book of children's stories published in England. I hope it may be successful if undertaken.

Mom had a nice time at Grass Ridge and returned home a few minutes after I arrived at noon.

Today is the last time I can post to Rev Barnes to catch him before leaving for England on July 4<sup>th</sup>. He and his wife have had a wonderful tour round the world. We are having very cold nights but beautiful bright days.

We are glad to hear that the moving of the various homes has been accomplished satisfactorily. We shall hope to see them sometime. Rex and Arthur have birthdays this month. It is Rex's today. I must write to them.

Uncle Gervase has bought one of Uncle Herbert's plots at Fish River. There is no house there so he will have to build.

We are both keeping well but feel the cold a good deal. Thanks for letters to hand but cannot reply to all of them now.

Love from Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Wednesday mornings seem to come round very quickly. No sooner have I finished one letter than the next seems to be on me. It is one of my greatest pleasures to be able to write and so keep up the family connection. I hope as you grow older that you will always try to keep the family circle in touch with one another. It has often saddened me when I hear of families which have not heard from one another for years. I think we have heard from each home during the week. We are sorry that Douglas and Evelyn are not able to move into their new house before the school holidays. The children would have been excited in getting everything into place. The builder must surely be very short of labour to have taken so long over the job. We are picturing the children going home this week. I hope they will all have a very happy time.

Grace reports Ted and one of the girls being away at his parents. He must need a rest and holiday after all the excitement of selling the plot and moving etc. Joe and Blodwen have settled into their new home and find same convenient as will have the benefit of their wireless set which they were not able to use whilst at Shannon owing to its being an electric set. Reg and Dot are fearing an outbreak of measles as the children around them have had it. It is just this time last year we were starting on our holiday to them and the Game Reserve. I hope when my sight is restored to be able to pay another visit.

Ruth and Denis are looking to spend their September holidays in these parts. I hope it will materialise. I see that George and Hilda Collett are advertising their farm at Tarka for sale in July. They have been wanting to dispose of it for a long while. I hope I shall be back from my op by that time. Nothing is so far settled as to the actual date that I go down to hospital. I am not making any definite plans until after Synod is over.

On Saturday last we took a run out to Baroda at the invitation of Iris and May (Uncle Bertie's girls) who were hostesses for the tennis tea that day. Neither of us had ever been there and we met quite a number of friends. We had too Mr Seller with us. Of course I could not see anything of the play but enjoyed the opportunity of having a chat with one and another. On Sunday morning, we took Rev Douglas to Dagga Boer for service. We have often passed there but not met any of the folk. There have been many changes since the old people passed over. A new generation has arisen whom we know not. There were only 16 of us at service but it was a nice opportunity of getting to know the new surroundings and something of their needs. We had dinner at the old home of the Trollips. This has been greatly altered and improved quite out of recognition to what it was in Uncle James' and our younger days. Next Sunday we are taking Mr Douglas to Fish River. He leaves for his home the next day. We are having Rev Glasson for a few weeks until Mr Barnes returns. I had expected to hear from him from England by yesterday's mail but I was a week out in my calculations.

We expected Harry Collett's daughter on Monday last but he phoned to say they had visitors and she would come on Thursday evening. Uncle Bertie's wife has had to go to Port Elizabeth for a month or so owing to heart trouble. We hope she will soon be better. We have not seen anything of Enid in town yet. She has not been at all well since her return from Cape Town. Uncle Jack and Agnes had dinner with us yesterday. Aunt Emmie is still in Maritzburg and hopes she will be able to stay some time. Her heart still troubles a little at that altitude. Freda has got home safely. Nothing dreadful happened to her children whilst she was away.

The weather lately has been splendid. Of course it is cold at night and first thing in the morning but fine. Our grapefruit is nearly finished.

Grace writes that she is also busy arranging hospitality for the Synod which is being held at Kroonstad the same time as ours. Ted is expected home this week.

Much love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am seriously thinking of changing my day for posting my weekly letter. I find it is a great rush as it is the regular weekly half holiday and we generally like to take someone out for a spin when the weather is nice as it has been lately. Then again, we only get your letters about noon and this does not allow sufficient time to read and re-read them and answer them before five when our post box closes. Will you therefore please let me know which will be the best day for me to post in future. I generally do my writing before breakfast and leave room for any special news which may arise during the day. There are many interruptions during the day so unless I get a move on, I should not be able to post at all.

The news of importance this week is the arrival of Ethne Collett, second eldest daughter of Harry Collett of Harry Collett of Greyville, Middelburg. Her train was due to arrive at 9.47 pm last Thursday but only turned up at 12.30 am Friday morning. She is very bright and useful and I am sure will be a great comfort to us both. She will soon get used to the car. On Sunday we all three went to Fish River service with Rev Douglas who preached his last sermon there. We went in the car with one of the church members who had never been to a service there so he drove his car. There were 13 sat down to dinner at Uncle Herbert's. They knew we were coming. We returned about three pm. Mr Douglas took the evening service here and left the next morning for Middelburg. He is really a remarkable man. He is in his eighty-third year and preaches with the vigour of a young man. Some of you may remember that we had him in Vryburg for a month some years ago.

Aunt Emmie writes from Maritzburg that she is so far keeping pretty well but has seen a doctor regarding her remaining there. She is waiting to what effect the altitude has upon her heart.

Douglas writes that he does not think they will be able to move into the new house before the middle of August. The works seems to be going slowly but of course, it is a large place and not too many are working upon it. I am glad to see he is providing for installing electric light which will be a great comfort. The children are now home for the school holidays.

Mrs Hudson is in the Vryburg hospital and Trixie has given up her trip to East London to be bridesmaid for Nelly Rickett's wedding. Mrs Hobkirk, Mrs Rodger's sister, is ill at Cape Town.

Grace says she has been busy making arrangements for the entertainment (hospitality) for the ministers attending the Synod in Kroonstad, the same as I have been doing here. I hope she has been as successful. Ted was expected back from his holiday to his parents at the end of last week. I hope he has had a good time. I have suggested that Aunt Emmie might stay with his people if convenient if she has to live in Durban instead of Maritzburg. They seem to like their new home in town but must miss much of the freedom they enjoyed on the plot.

Joe and Blodwen have also settled down in their new home in Bloemfontein. He is only ten minutes walk from his works so is able to get home for his mid-day meal. They are able to see more of their friends than at Shannon.

Reg and Dot are looking forward to their holiday in February and I hope they come this way. They seem very busy in one way and another for various good works. They have a large circle of friends there. We are hoping to see Ruth and Denis here during the school holidays in August. They are coming to stay some time with Hilda and George at Tarka.

I hope the parcel of dried fruit that I asked Aunt Jessie to post to each family arrived in good condition. Mom is not very well this morning and is having breakfast in bed. She has caught cold somehow and her head aches, hope she will soon be better. The maid was away sick (sore leg) one day but is back again now. Yesterday we had a call from Mr and Mrs Elder, Friends from De Aar. Alice Biggs and family is expected today on a short visit to The Poplars.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Thanks for your replies regarding the day for posting my letter. I have enquired from the Post Office and they inform me that letters posted by the fast train on Thursday night arrive in Bloemfontein on Friday morning. Kroonstad letters are sorted from there and forwarded by the next train. Potgietersrus post would go direct to Johannesburg, arriving there Friday afternoon so should arrive at Dot's on Saturday morning or evening if they have two posts a day. Cape Town and Vryburg posts go on by goods train from Naauwpoort but Douglas says it does not matter about their letters as they get them at any odd time as opportunity offers. I shall be glad to hear when this week's mail does actually reach the various homes.

We are finding Ethne very useful and bright. She helps Mom a good deal in the housework and gives her her breakfast in bed these cold mornings. She is a good reader and grasps the meaning. When in the car, she knits whilst I am busy in the shops etc. She is a very earnest Christian and want to help in the Sunday School and is speaking at the fellowship meeting tomorrow evening.

My vision is undoubtedly getting worse so she is able to help with the Synod work. I used to be able to read my own writing but cannot do so now.

We all went to Tarka service on Sunday morning and stayed to dinner with George and Hilda Collett. They are advertising their arm for sale this month but it is doubtful if they will get their price.

I have been troubled lately with a nasty bout of indigestion which is difficult to shift. I am trying semi-starvation and drinking barley water. I hope it will yield to treatment. Otherwise we are all as well as usual. We are having beautiful weather except that the mornings are very cold but that is only to be expected. We had a nice shower a few evenings ago which practically filled our tank.

Thanks for all letters received during the week from each home. Douglas and Evelyn report their house nearing completion but they do not expect to move in before August. Provision has been made for installing electric light if he can afford it when the house is completed. He is sending away about forty. The children are having a good time during the holidays. We had nice letters from Arthur and Rex. Grace reports the safe return home of Ted and Jean after their holiday at Durban with his folk. Dot says that her children have not taken measles yet but expects they will. She also says some of the fruit trees are in bloom.

Alice Biggs has asked us to go and see Aunt Letty when she celebrates her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday next month. They were going to try to arrange a family reunion but owing to Frank's illness, that is abandoned. However, they want as many of the relations to go over independently on or before the event. As Alice's daughter is staying with Mary during the holidays, it is possible we might take her back next week and spend a few days with them and also visit Rev and Mrs Legg who gave us an invitation some time ago. Mom thinks I need a change after all the work in arranging for the Synod. The bulk of the work is done.

Joe and Blodwen evidently miss their car, they sold it when they left Shannon. He wants to buy mine if I decide to sell it after my op. They all seem to be well. Aunt Emmie expects to have to go and stay in Durban after the rush is over. We go to market sometimes now that Ethne is here. Rev and Mrs Barnes leave Liverpool next Saturday. It will be a relief to hand over my duties to them as soon as they return. It has been a pleasure to be able to help with the work. I shall be glad when the Synod is satisfactorily over.

It is now Thursday morning and I am afraid that this is a very badly typed letter. My visibility is decreasing and it takes a long time to write but I should be sorry not to be able to do so even if it is badly done.

Much love to one and all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

Another week gone. It has been much the same as others that have gone before it. The common round, the daily task still furnishes us with much to be thankful for. We have plenty to do and fairly good health with which to accomplish our duties. Mom changed the usual run of events by getting a nasty bilious attack last Friday. We had been to an evening reading at The Poplars on Thursday evening and shortly after going to bed, Mom was violently sick and kept it up until the early hours of the morning. We have not discovered the cause but after spending the whole day in bed, she seems none the worse for the upset. I, too, have had rather a more violent attack of my old complaint – indigestion – accompanied with sharp pains in various parts of my anatomy but these have yielded to treatment and today I am feeling as fit as the proverbial fiddle. I may say that after waiting more than seven months, my dentist has at last fixed up three additional grinders in my lower jaw so I am hoping to be able to masticate my food better.

We are having a very mild winter so far. The days are about perfect, very little wind and bright sunshine. The nights are cold excepting the last few which have been decidedly mild. I think the weather is working up for rain which would be unseasonable but very welcome. We may expect fruit trees to be out in bloom if this weather continues, then late frosts may spoil the fruit crop. Dot reports some of their trees already in blossom. I have just had put up a vine trellis to accommodate the vines we planted last year in the garden. They have grown tremendously during the one season that they need something to climb on. I hope we may get fruit from them this year. We are still enjoying our grapefruit. We just pick fresh ones every day. We have given a lot of them away.

Aunt Eliza gave an evening for Winnie Biggs and Ethne on Monday which we all enjoyed. We played Lexicon most part of the evening. Rev Glasson junior was also invited and he played the piano very nicely. Mom played her “quick piece” in usual good style. It is very seldom Aunt’s piano is used. We should like to have one but do not know where we could put it unless we shifted the settee into the dining room and disposed of the folding bed. That is in the dining room at present.

We are leaving on Friday morning for Graaff Reinet via Middelburg so as to give Ethne the opportunity of seeing one of her brothers who is home for a short time prior to going overseas. We shall sleep there that night and are likely to arrive in Graaff Reinet some time Saturday afternoon. We are taking Winifred Biggs home to school and after visiting Aunt Letty and other relations, look to come back via Pearston and Somerset East, calling at Dagga Boer on the way. We want to be back here by Thursday or Friday of next week. Please write as usual.

We intended going out to Fish River last Saturday to watch the tennis but an unfortunate accident occurred on Friday morning which upset all plans. A baboon hunt had been organised on Uncle Norman’s farm and amongst the seventeen shooters was a young van Heerden, nephew of Aunt Annie, Bertie’s wife, and he was accidentally shot dead, being mistaken for a baboon. They do not know who fired the fatal shot, which is fortunate that they don’t, but a gloom has been cast over the town. He was a married man with one child, 2½ years old. The widow is entirely unprovided for. It was a very large funeral on Saturday morning. Fortunately we had a minister here who conducted the funeral.

Thanks for all letters received during the week. I am trying to answer them as received. Ethne is doing very well and is a great help in every way.

Much love to each and all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I did not send any circular letter last week owing to our being away at Graaff Reinet. I sent each of you a postcard reporting our arrival there. I am now able to report our safe return. I do not know how far I shall be able to get with my record of events but will do my best. We left home on Friday after breakfast and had dinner with Uncle Herbert. He is in apparent good health and always busy on the farm. The "we" comprised of Mom, Ethne (at the wheel), Winnie Biggs (Alice and Dan's daughter) who had been spending her school holidays with Mary, and myself. We experienced heavy mist as far as Fish River but it was fine all the rest of the way to Greyville and Milton where Ethne's parents and brother live. It was Harry Collett who I was able to rely on a little when he came to Cape Town a few years ago for an operation. We spent the night there and during the evening also met Ted Collett and wife both of whom I was able to assist in different ways. It was their son's wedding that Mom and I attended at Stellenbosch some years ago and when we experienced our first skid with the car. The married son, wife and two children were also there so it was a large family gathering. We enjoyed recounting events of our younger days. On Saturday morning we went on to Middelburg, calling on some friends and having dinner with Myra Collett and Mrs Forbes. We had morning tea with Rev and Mrs Glasson, parents of the young minister who has been supplying here for a few Sundays. We also met Ben Collett and were interested in his electric rays with which he has cured a number of persons suffering from various ills. We have invited him here to try his skill. The rays seem to be especially good for rheumatism. We left for Graaff Reinet after dinner. I had never been on this road before. It is a pretty journey, mostly down hill. We joined the direct road from Cradock to Graaff Reinet at Bethesda Road station. Joe had advised us not to take the mountain (direct) road as it is very steep and dangerous. We met Rev and Mrs Legg and Miss Elsie Wookey as we got near to Alice's home at Brooklyn. They had been to Aberdeen. We offered Miss Wookey a seat to Cradock as she had never been in the town. She subsequently declined it as she had to be in Kimberley on a certain date. We received a very hearty welcome at Brookley from Alice and Alan. They have a very beautiful home in every sense of the word - their own electric light, hot and cold water system, waterborne sewage etc. We occupied the same room as brother Joe had some years ago. On Sunday morning we enjoyed a long chat with old Mrs Biggs who has her own house close to Alice. She prefers living alone but Alan's secretary sleeps with her. The secretary has also been governess to the younger children but this quarter all three children are going to school in Graaff Reinet from Mondays to Fridays. It rained softly during the day but we did not take much notice of it as there was no run of water on the farm. Alice had to take the three girls into school on Sunday afternoon so as to be settled in at the people they are staying with. It was therefore arranged that we should go on to Florrie at Vrede in the afternoon. Alice accompanied us as far as the cross road and we were surprised to see the quantity of water in the road but did not suspect any difficulty until we got off the main roads. Then it was a case of skidding all over the place and slushing through mud and potholes and sluits. When we had got about ten miles from town, water got into our distributor and troubles began. It was raining steadily though not too heavily. Passing cars tried to help us but we could not make progress and as it was getting dark and not knowing the road, we decided to retrace our steps. The R.A. Club supplies all its members with coupons so that if they meet with an accident or are held up for any cause, they can send in word to the nearest garage and they will send someone out to bring such person in. I availed myself of this service. The RAC pays for the cost of such transport. We got a passing car to take the message and after waiting on the bank of a stream for over two hours in the dark (our lights were on), a motorcar with two mechanics arrived and they soon got the car going and brought us safely back to town where we stayed the night at an hotel. I should mention that before we left Alice's, we phoned saying we were starting and they might expect us in about an hour's time. When we did not arrive, they naturally got anxious and Kathleen's

husband (Boy Vorster) and one of his children, set off to look for us. They travelled some distance and saw no sign of us so returned as Roy was afraid for his son's health in the wet. Then he started off again, this time with Florrie's son, John. They came right in into Graaff Reinet as they saw the tail lights of our car just in front of them. We all arrived at the same time. After a brief consultation as to what was the best plan to make, we decided to stay in case anything had to be done to the car. It was about nine pm when we got in and went to bed as soon as we had had some refreshment. We learned at the hotel that Denham Collett had also arrived in the rain. Next morning before Mom was up, he came to our room and told us his tale of the journey he had had from Port Elizabeth through the rain. He had had a worse experience than we had, fortunately no accident had occurred but he saw several cars that had met with misfortunes. The next morning we started off for Vrede. Boy Vorster met us a few miles from the house and escorted us over the worst part of the road. Of course it was still very wet and sloshy. Our car was covered in mud from the roof downwards. The native servants were soon busy cleaning it with satisfactory results. Aunt Letty was at Vrede and we were soon comfortably settled. There was no rain that day but the roads were still very wet so we did not go anywhere. Tuesday morning we went to the top farm, Langfontein. This is a beautiful house, large lofty rooms and commanding a wonderful outlook. Joan (Ernest's daughter) has a farm and school here. The mountain in front of the house is very fine but of course hides the view. The garden and environment generally betokens great wealth, if not at present, certainly in the past. It is truly beautiful for situation. I am told there are several houses similarly built in the neighbourhood.

The farmers of the days when it was built loved large and lofty rooms. One such room we were told was formerly used as an entertainment room with folding doors etc. The whole betokens great prosperity. At present Kathleen has her home there but since Frank has been ill and away at a nursing home in Cape Town, she has been with her husband living with Florrie at Vrede.

On Tuesday afternoon we visited the big dam on Vrede which Frank started some time ago. It is not yet completed but is holding a good supply of water. The work so far has cost some few thousand pounds and when full will be a magnificent sheet of water. The construction at the back of the dam is solid stone, stepped in layers of about ten feet sloping upwards. Against this wall is an earth wall 150 feet thick at the base, tapering at a height of fifty feet. At the top it is wide enough for four or more cars to stand abreast. The car we were in was able to turn round on the wall quite easily.

I should have mentioned that Florrie had gone to town with her son and Ruth, who was to leave for school at Port Elizabeth the same evening. The youngest child, Dennis, was already at school in Graaff Reinet. After visiting the dam, we went to see some of the extensive lands at the other end of the farm. These are under irrigation from the dam we had just seen. We did not call at the house in passing. Had we done so, we should have heard the news of the sudden death of Florrie's husband, Frank, at Cape Town that day. The Post Office had been trying to get into touch with them over the phone but as we were all out at the time, they gave the news to neighbours who later on told us. Florrie in the meantime had heard the sad news whilst shopping in town. Alice was also in town. Of course Ruth did not go to Port Elizabeth and Florrie brought her and Denis back with her. It was a sad homecoming. A little later in the evening, Alan and Alice came up to discuss plans for the funeral etc. We naturally left them to make our own arrangements and retired. Alice and Alan returned to their farm during the night and to break the news to old Mrs Biggs the following morning. Mrs Biggs Snr desired that Frank should be buried at Brooklyn, where his father lies, but Florrie wanted the internment at her home as there being no sons in Alice's family, that farm might go out of the family. Mrs Biggs Sr at last consented. The coffin was brought up from Cape Town in a hearse by road, travelling all through the night (cost probably about £50.) The funeral took place on Thursday afternoon and there must have been fully 200 persons present. I was given a seat in Rev Files' car. The Methodist service was used. No mention was made of his attachment to the Christian Science



beliefs which Frank and Florrie have embraced. All the family was present, Dan and family as well as Jamie and family came by car from Louisvale. Mary, Ernest, came from Cradock by car. Mom and Ethne did not go.

With regard to the future, it is expected that farming will go on as usual. Kathleen and family most likely will move to live permanently in Vrede, Vorster told me. Frank had asked him to manage the farm until the youngest son was of age – he is 14 now. There are ten thousand sheep on the farm and the position is considered quite sound.

We had been invited to stay at Rev Legg's in Graaff Reinet. We arrived there for morning tea on Wednesday. It was an additional pleasure to meet Miss Wookey there and to learn much Vryburg news at first hand from her. She left the same evening for Kimberley. We motored to the van Ryneveld dam which is a fine piece of work and impounds a vast quantity of water. We did not go to the Valley of Desolation as the road was considered too dangerous. Mr and Mrs Legg seem very comfortable in their new environment. He has nothing like as much travelling about the district as he had in Vryburg. His church is near and seats about 300. Mom and Ethne bought some plants from the botanical gardens and saw more of the town than I was able to see.

There was nothing wrong with the car so we started on our return trip on Friday morning after breakfast. The roads had dried by then and we had no trouble in reaching Pearston and Somerset East. At the former, we (or rather I) called on Mr Hampton Head who was educated at Sidcot Friends School. He is not a member of the Society of Friends but has always been interested in them. Uncle Joe went to see him when here. He is very old and business is practically nil. His wife has had a stroke and is more or less of an invalid. I did not see her. At Somerset East I called on Mr Holden and had a chat with him re Ruth's affairs. We stopped for afternoon tea at Miss May Trollip's. Dagga Boer have had the pleasure of entertaining Ethne's mother, sister and a brother over the weekend. Letters from Rev Barnes and Uncle Willie this week state that they hoped to meet for a few minutes before Rev Barnes sailed from Liverpool. They are at Cape Town on Friday and here next Wednesday. I shall be glad to hand over to them as soon as possible. On Tuesday evening we heard four shots fired nearby and we hear that our opposite neighbour, Mr Heathcote attempted to commit suicide. He has been drinking for years. As I have written so much this week, I will not attempt another sheet. I fear I have made many mistakes which please excuse. Thanks for all letters received on our return.

Much love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am not going to inflict such a long letter this week as first, for one thing, I have not so much news to communicate or time at my disposal.

First let me say we are all well and everything is going along as usual. We are practically ready to receive our visitors next Tuesday evening. We are having Rev Glasson Sr of Middelburg and Rev Thompson from near Salem. They will occupy the two single beds in the spare room whilst Ethne will sleep on the stoep. We are also having Uncle Gervase and Ethne's father. They will sleep in a room at Mrs Heathcote's opposite and have meals with us. If Wesley Collett is sent as a representative, we may also have him to meals and he can sleep at the Heathcote's as well.

Rev and Mrs Barnes arrived back on Tuesday night after spending a few days in Cape Town where they saw the Jennings. Mrs Jennings is still more of an invalid than well. Aunt Eliza lent us her "welcome home" to put up in the manse entrance hall. It was 10.40 pm when the train arrived so we have not had any opportunity of a chat. He reports having seen my brother Willie on board for a few minutes just before sailing. He appeared very well – portly and flourishing. Uncle also writes that he saw them and was pleased to send his greetings by them. I hope some day he will come and visit his numerous relations in this country.

We heard the sad news over the air yesterday afternoon of the sudden death of Rev Stanton, President of the SA Methodist Conference. He was here a few months ago and spent part of the evening in our house. Rev Jennings drove him and me to Debenek by car after his visit. I knew he was looking forward with much interest to presiding over the forthcoming Conference at Maritzburg in October. He sent me a copy of his Synod plans a few days ago. I also motored him to a farm when we were in Kroonstad. I shall miss him very much if and when I revisit Grace and Ted. He died in a tram in Johannesburg.

Yesterday afternoon we visited Geo Byrnes new home just close to the old plantation where we stayed when the children were young. He has built it with texico roofing and it has only cost about thirty pounds. It is very cosy. We took Mary with us and after having afternoon tea with them, went on to Mr Bladen's farm where the apples came from that I sent each of you last year. He and his wife are settlers and work very hard. They have over 350 fowls in a long run, all white ones. They get about 160 eggs a day and have contracts for all they can produce at 1/3d per dozen all the year round. They also send butter to town. Their chief industry, however, seems to be fruit. Their apple crop was a failure this year owing to severe frosts last November when the blossom was on the trees. This year they have got about 20 grain bags full of walnuts which they sell at 1/-per lb or £40 per bag of 50 lbs. Two of their children are being educated in England.

You will be sorry to hear that Uncle Herbert has not been so well lately. He came to town last Friday to see his Dr. We have two doctors here and they carefully overhauled him and informed him afterwards that the growth was spreading. He was out shooting the day before and got very tired but otherwise he is still very active. Doctors encourage him to carry on and do just what he feels he can do. He says he gets tired walking about and tired if he sits still and even resting he gets tired and often gets up in the night to take some exercise. We all hope he will not have a long period of suffering. We may go and see him on August bank holiday.

Dr Stewart has written saying it will be convenient for him to do the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the op about August 22<sup>nd</sup> so that settles that. Joe still says he wants to be with me so I have suggested that he comes here say by Saturday morning or perhaps Friday and Mom, he and I can either go down by car or train. There will be no need for them to stay after the op so they can return together. Ethne's parents have asked Mom to stay with them whilst I am away but she does not care about being far away. Ethne is under promise to go and stay with a friend of hers who is due to come but of a nursing home about the 22<sup>nd</sup> so it looks as though the time will be very

suitable for all concerned. I have to write to the Dr again to make final arrangements. It seems an unnecessary expense for anyone to stay in Port Elizabeth as the visiting hours are only one hour each afternoon and half an hour in the evening. Mom can of course stay at Fish River if she likes.

Ruth writes that Denis has a month's holiday from about 19<sup>th</sup> so we are arranging for her and Denis to come to us directly after Synod, say about 13<sup>th</sup> and they will visit Hilda and George from here. They also want to spend some time near Port Alfred. We are looking forward to their visit as Ruth has never been to see us.

Capt Upton writes saying he is looking to come out again on a business trip next month. I hope he will come this way.

Grace has had similar job to me in finding homes for the ministers attending the Synod in Kroonstad. There will be a sad gloom cast over their gathering caused by the death of Rev Stanton.

I must not stop to write more now as correspondence has to be attended to. Next week I hope to be able to tell you that further arrangements have been made re the operation etc.

Thanks for all letters received which Mom reads to me.

Ethne is still very useful and helps with the cooking and housework as well as reading and writing. I cannot see to read what I have typed so please excuse mistakes.

I have spent most of the morning since breakfast in handing over the work to Rev Barnes.

Much love to all

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am commencing to write a day earlier than usual as we are likely to be busy with Synod arrangements from now onwards. Our two ministers arrived on Tuesday afternoon and at least two or possibly three laymen will arrive on Monday morning. Ethne's father is one of the laymen and Uncle Gervase the other. Perhaps Wesley Collett may also come. We have taken room at Heathcots for them and they will have meals with us. At the last moment quite a number of those who had promised to entertain guests have dropped out for various reasons, some owing to sickness etc. This has given a good deal of extra work but we are well away with it now. So far they all seem very pleased with the arrangements made. Needless to say, I shall be glad when it is all over. I could not have managed without Ethne's help doing the writing etc.

You will be interested in hearing that Joe has written suggesting his leaving Bloemfontein on Thursday evening 20<sup>th</sup> arriving here on Friday morning and Mom and I joining the same train for Port Elizabeth. I have written to the Dr asking if I am to go straight to hospital or must I go to his consulting rooms first for further examination. I hope the op will be performed either on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning so that Mom and Joe can return as soon as possible after it is over. Mom has had many invitations to stay with relations whilst I am away and will probably be at Grass Ridge and Katkop for some time. She may also go to Ethne's home for a while. You must please write me as usual at the Provincial Hospital, Port Elizabeth but I will give further instructions on this point when I hear which ward I shall be in. The nurses will, I am sure, read the letters to me.

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>, we hope to be at Fish River for the opening of the new hall which has been erected for the Tennis Club, Farmers' Association and Church purposes. It is to be called Herbert Joseph Collett Hall. We shall return same evening. I hope Uncle Herbert will be well enough to perform the opening ceremony. We took a tour round on Monday last (bank holiday). We had morning tea at Katkop and dinner at Grass Ridge and supper at Uncle Herbert's. Ethne has not been to some of these relations before. We got back about 7.30. We are all feeling concerned about Uncle Herbert. He is very quiet and there is no doubt that he is getting worse. How long he may last it is impossible to say. I hope nothing happens whilst I am away. He is still active but very quiet. He is suffering more than before but never complains.

I am not taking my typewriter with me but will have a good supply of postcards which I hope to be able to send from time to time. Please do not be anxious about me. I am prepared for every eventuality.

The sudden death of Rev Stanton has cast a gloom over the Synod. We had him here one evening during his visit in February last. We shall miss him when we visit Kroonstad again.

Grace very kindly asks us to go to them when we are ready after the op. We are not making any plans so far ahead.

This day next week the Synod will be over. We are expecting Ruth and Denis about that time. The weather the last few days has been very windy and uncomfortable.

I cannot write more this week so will post today (Wednesday).

Last Monday being a holiday, we have not received the usual batch of letters from you.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

The Synod which has been looked forward to for so long has come and gone. It has been a very enjoyable and blessed time. All say it is the best Synod for years and the spirit was excellent. I cannot attempt to tell of all the meetings and arrangements made but they have all gone with a swing. The Mayor's social in the Town Hall last evening was the final gathering. We have tried to see as many of the delegates as possible at one or other meal and this meant quite a number. Our two guests were very nice – Rev Owen Thompson and Glasson. The latter is father of the young man who supplied the pulpit here for a few weeks. Mr Thompson is a poet and has given us a copy of his verse whilst in hospital. The weather has been very kind to us during the week but cold at nights. We must expect windy weather now.

Ruth writes that she and Denis are arriving on Friday night. A school chum of Denis is also coming with him so they will sleep on the Stoep and Ruth will share the spare room with Ethne. Ethne will be going home on the morning of 21<sup>st</sup>. I do not know if it will be necessary for her to return after the operation. She has been very useful to both of us. It is very probable she will be going to assist Rev Wellington at Healdtown next year as he is to be the new President. She is thrilled at the idea. Her father and Uncle Gervase who came for Synod on Monday morning and had meals with us and slept over the way at Heathcot have now all returned.

Joe writes that he has obtained leave from next Thursday evening and will arrive here on Friday morning 21<sup>st</sup> and we join the same train. I am to go to hospital from the station and Dr will see me the following morning. I do not expect the op will be performed that morning. The local man here examined my eyes a day or two ago and said they had got very much worse during the last few months. I have realised this myself for some time past. I am taking a supply of postcards already addressed to each of you and hope to be able to write a few lines in pencil to you from time to time. I have no idea how long I shall be away but you may be sure I shall appreciate any letters that may be sent to me. No doubt one of the nurses will read them to me. I am trying to leave everything straight here before leaving.

The Synod has done me the honour of electing me as its representative to Conference which meets in Maritzburg next October about 28<sup>th</sup>. Of course I do not know if I shall be able to attend but I may. It would be nice if we could make a tour then and visit Bloemfontein, Kroonstad, Maritzburg, Johannesburg Exhibition, Potgietersrus and Vryburg and then home. I am not building on it but it works if all goes well.

I cannot write more this week but hope to write again next week for the last time before my operation.

We are both keeping well for which we are very thankful.

Some letters have come to hand but I am not able to read them or to read what I have written. My vision is so much worse that it is difficult to do anything for myself in the writing way.

Much love to you all  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My dear Children,

I hope to be able to write my usual dear all for the last time for an indefinite period this week but feel that I should like just to send a personal letter to you all as I now I shall be very busy right up to the time of leaving.

I am not fearful or dreading the ordeal. I am to go through this week and only hope and pray that it may be successful. Naturally I grudge the expense on myself but am thankful that I am able to bear it. For some time I have felt that I am more or less a useless member of the community, not being able to do for myself as I would like to. I do not like the idea of being a burden on others or having to be waited on. Rather would I be of service to those around me and help them. Everyone has been most kind and thoughtful on my behalf for which I am most thankful.

During my temporary idleness in hospital, I shall have much time for thought and reflection. Needless to say you all will be much in my thoughts. My prayer for you all is that you may continue to grow in grace and in favour with God and man. It has been a great source of comfort and satisfaction to me to know that all of you have good homes and loving children and a fair measure of this world's comforts. None of you have given us any unnecessary anxiety or distress but have always acted honourably and straightforwardly in matters of business and domestic affairs. I have endeavoured to set you an example in this respect.

I have never forced religion upon you, choosing rather that each should make the great decision for yourselves. It is the only thing that matters in this world and the next. I hope you have read and re-read the little booklet I sent each of you some months ago entitled "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment." It has been a great help to me and I hope you can all say that "you know in whom you have trusted and are sure that He is able to keep you unto that day."

I am looking forward to seeing you all again but in the words of a hymn we often used to sing "I know not what awaits me. God kindly veils my eyes" so I conclude with the hope that if we do not meet again here, we shall do so in Heaven.

Yours with dearest love to all,

Your loving

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am commencing my letter on Wednesday morning as we are going out to Fish River later in the day to see the opening of the Herbert Joseph Collett Hall as it is officially to be called. We shall return this evening.

Ruth, Denis and his chum – a son of Rev Briggs of Grahamstown – arrived on Friday evening about 9.30. I was presiding over a meeting addressed by Rev Heath so had to leave before it was quite over. The two boys slept on the back stoep and Ruth and Ethne shared the spare room. The boys have gone out to George and Hilda's farm as they came on Monday to hear Mr Edwin Orr, the Iris evangelist. We are taking Ruth out there tomorrow morning.

It is an old saying that trouble never comes singly. I had planned to have the operation as soon after Synod as possible. The Synod closed on Tuesday last week and delegates left on Wednesday morning, all except one, Rev Barnes, who was not feeling too well during Synod and on Wednesday evening, he was taken ill and was delirious. Doctor says it is his nerves and has ordered him to go to Cape Town to consult a specialist. This is most unfortunate after his six months holiday and my getting away very awkward. If I had not made all the arrangements at the hospital etc., I would be inclined to postpone going but they all think I should go. I have phoned to Grahamstown to see if we can get a minister from there to come and supply whilst Mr Barnes is away and hope to hear today the result. Mrs Barnes goes with him and looks to return at once. However, difficulties are sent to be got over and no doubt this one, as others, will be surmounted. Joe wrote yesterday saying he might be transferred to another department in the works and had wired to Douglas to see if he could accompany us to Port Elizabeth instead of him. We are awaiting his reply. Mr Heath preached on Sunday last instead of Mr Barnes.

Wednesday evening. We have just returned from Fish River. There were about 200 persons at the opening which passed off most successfully. Uncle Herbert made a neat speech recounting the fact that when he first came to Saltpansdrift there was not a station at Fish River. Refreshments were served and everyone was very pleased with the hall. It will be a great blessing. We stayed to supper with Uncle Herbert and came home directly after as there is much still to be done in making arrangements before I leave. No telegram has come from Joe this afternoon so we may hear tomorrow what plans have been made.

I had a chat with Mr Metcalf whilst at Fish River as he has had a similar operation to what I am to go through. He says this second stage is not the last and will probably necessitate my staying there about six weeks. He emphasises the necessity for patience between this and the next stage which is called "Needling". He says on no account must I be in a hurry to have the third operation. The third stage is very painful but necessary. He also says that probably they will supply me with glasses after the second operation but these will be scrapped after the third operation and new glasses will be given again. This of course is very disappointing to me, as I had no idea that there was a third stage. I suppose I shall know more about it when I see him on Saturday.

Later. Postcard from Blodwen says Joe is coming. Ruth goes to Tarka this afternoon. I think I have paid all my accounts to date so I can get away with a clear mind. I could write much more but need to collect my thoughts. Thanks for all letters received. I have left word for all letters to be sent on to Provincial Hospital, Port Elizabeth. I am taking my typewriter after all. Much love to all of you and hoping to be able to write to you all again soon from your loving

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

After four weeks silence, let my first words be those of thankfulness for all the mercies which have been vouchsafed to me during the time of my enforced silence. As so often happens, the events which we so much dread and fear are not so fearful as anticipated. I admit that I was somewhat fearful of the ten days of darkness and having to lie perfectly still on my back. It was a strain and ordeal but I gladly admit that the kind thoughts and prayers of my many friends up and down the country sustained me.

I told the doctor that I had prayed for patience and he replied that the prayers had been granted and I was a paragon of patience. I do not say this boastfully but with all humility and thankfulness. It was a tiring ordeal but it was well worthwhile. The operation itself did not take very long. I do not think I was away from the ward more than half an hour or so. No chloroform was administered but a few drops of cocaine placed in the eye. I felt the knife or instrument scraping inside the eye but it was soon over. The bandages of both eyes were released for changing on the second day and just for a moment for the Dr to see how it was getting on. Doctor did not approve of my having the wireless so I found time rather wearisome. The first two or three days in hospital were very noisy as two patients (Jews) seemed to think the place belonged to them with their cat calls to patients in the other wards. It was very annoying. The last three days in hospital, there were only three patients, all eye subjects. One was a man with the same trouble as myself while the other was a fellow with a piece of steel in his eye. We got very friendly and enjoyed each others company. I had a lot of visitors and Mom was allowed to come any time during the day and evening which made it very nice for me. You already know that Joe travelled down with us by train and remained until the operation was over on Monday. We were very glad to have him with us and he was a great help.

The evening before we left Cradock, Douglas phoned from Vryberg, saying he wanted to come down and bring us home. He left the train at Cradock on Monday night and brought my car through to Port Elizabeth on Tuesday evening, the day that I was allowed out of hospital. I happened to be standing outside of the house where we were staying when he arrived. He took us about a good deal and we left on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> at 9 am arriving home at about 7 pm. We spent a couple of hours in Grahamstown with Ruth and also called on a family of Willmores at Seven Fountains who are related to Evelyn. Douglas phoned to them shortly before we arrived asking them to have tea ready for three, without letting them know who he was and arrived much to their joy and surprise. We saw Dr Stewart before we left and he tested my sight and assured me that I shall regain my vision but will have to undergo further treatment, as part of the capsule enclosing the cataract has not gone away. This will mean another few days in hospital next month. I shall probably go down and have it done on my way to the Maritzburg Conference. Mom has kept you posted with letters and cards while I was in hospital and I have managed to write a few myself. I have tried to type this letter but find it too much of a strain so Ethne will finish it for me. She is at present working at Mr Radford's, helping with his books. Douglas left last evening for Vryburg. It has been very nice having him with us. He has taken us about a good deal, including a run out to Uncle Herbert's, who I am sorry to say is going downhill fast. I could write a good deal more but time does not permit. Many thanks for all your letters of sympathy etc. So far as our plans for the future are concerned, we think it best to stay here until I get my glasses so perhaps in November we will pay you a visit.

Much love to you all,  
Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1936

My Dear All,

Owing to the difficulties of not being able to see what I am typing, or reading what I have typed, Ethne will in future do this task for me. This is her handiwork, and no doubt you will readily see a great improvement in the typing, spacing etc. Of one thing I feel sure, you will notice that the typewriter spells much better than under my fingering!!!! Ethne is now sitting beside me, whilst I have my back to the light. So much for the introduction.

My eyesight is not improving, nor can I expect it to, until after the next operation after which I shall get my new glasses fitted. My present glasses I have not worn since the operation because I'm not able to focus with them. However I manage to get about with one eye, but I cannot stand the glare in my sick eye so that is kept covered. My plans for the future are not yet fixed, but it seems probable that I shall go to Maritzburg by train via Bloemfontein and Kroonstad, returning by boat via Port Elizabeth, and having the operation done after Conference. In any case, if I go, I shall go alone. Enough about myself.

I notice in all your letters you speak of dry and dusty weather. We are experiencing the same here. We have had some very hot days, the temperature being about 80. Our grapefruit tree is in full blossom, and I doubt if it has ever been so heavily laden. Our plumbago in front was trimmed during the winter and is now starting to flower. It will be a grand sight in a week or twos time. The vines and fig trees are in full leaf, or at least very nearly. The almond tree is in leaf but has not blossomed this year. The one next door was full of blossom – hard luck on us eh! Mom's garden looks fine. The Banksia is beautiful, and of course the blossoms from the grapefruit tree scent the whole garden. Our maid has been sick for a week, so for some days we have had to do all the work. Aunt Eliza has lent us her girl but she is too slow for a funeral. Speaking of Aunt Eliza, I'm glad to say her cold is much better than when we returned from Port Elizabeth. She should have stayed in bed but of course that was out of the question.

Last weekend, 16 young people from Middelburg led by Ethne's Uncle and Aunt, Mr and Mrs Mason (Daisy Collett) held a young people's Rally in the church with marked success. The Masons and their little daughter stayed with us, and later Ethne's sister, Vic. Her parents came down on Monday and we joined them in a trip to the training farm, where the 1820 Settlers Association held a reception. This afternoon we joined the Rev Smit and sister and went out to the Egg Rock over the new road which has been made by the Council at my suggestion. We returned via the warm bath going through the drift. It was a very enjoyable afternoon. Perhaps we will go out again next Wednesday if Rev Smit is still here.

You will be sorry to hear that Uncle Herbert is evidently getting much worse. Probably for the first time, he did not attend the Fish River service last Sunday. He is suffering far more pain in various parts of his body and does not care to see visitors. The doctor who performed the operation is passing through Cradock by train on Friday morning and I hope to have a chat with him. Uncle has declined an invitation to see him as he says "It would serve no useful purpose".

Ernest's Geoffrey and David Biggs left on Tuesday evening with the other children for the Johannesburg Exhibition. Joe and Blodwen are hoping to go to the Exhibition for a long weekend. Grace is looking after their babies whilst they are away. They have asked Reg and Dot to join them but business arrangements prevent them doing so. We are glad to hear that Douglas arrived home safely and that he saw the children in Kimberley. Douglas purchased the "railway bench" from us when he was here and we are glad to have its space. Talking of beds, we have recently installed twin beds and box spring mattresses in the spare room, and also two iron beds with high head and foot rails. These we have on the stoep placed one above the other, thus forming a two-decker bunk. Ethne sleeps in one of these.

Grace refers to her forthcoming fete in connection with the Methodist Church, which promises to be a great success. Dorothy has also been busy raising funds for their hospital. We have no definite news as to when Rev Barnes will return, although he is reported to be much

better since his teeth were extracted. Aunt Kate Dudley was in hospital for a week or two suffering from kidney trouble, but is now home again. Dulcie Moorcroft has been operated on this week having her appendix and gall bladder removed. She is getting on nicely so far. Douglas says he hopes to move into his new house during the school holidays. Arthur and Rex went to the Exhibition with the Kimberley boys. Sorry to hear that Ted has a bad cold, and the children have not been too well either. We have not heard from Ruth lately. We hope that she enjoyed her trip to East London, as delegate to the Presbyterian church. Thanks for all your letters and good wishes. I think Ethne has typed sufficient for this week. It was Joe's birthday last week and it is Grace and Douglas' next week. This sounds like the "Children's Corner".

Much love,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
30<sup>th</sup> September 1936

My Dear All,

Have you realised that in three months time we shall have passed Xmas and be entering upon another year if we are spared so long. Thanks for the various comments on last weeks improvement in typing and spelling. My hopes of having the third stage of my operation performed next week have been dashed to the ground as Dr Stewart, in a letter to hand, advises postponing it for another month. This is very disappointing as I had hoped to have regained my vision before visiting the families. At the time of writing, I cannot definitely see what course to follow. It seems to me pretty useless visiting any of you until I can see better as I should only be an additional burden and perhaps anxiety. I have received from the railway a quotation for a circular tour, including Bloemfontein, Kroonstad, Johannesburg, Potgietersrus, Vryburg (via Mafikeng) and back to Cradock for £11. £8.8 first class and £7.12.6d second class. This seems remarkably cheap and well worth considering. But what is the use of going if you can't see anything. I will let you know as soon as I arrive at any decision. I am still anxious to attend the Conference at Maritzburg, especially in view of the possibility of a change in the ministerial appointment here owing to the unfortunate continuance of Rev Barnes' illness.

On Saturday last we paid a visit to Mr Robertson's farm, a few miles out of town. His daughter stays at the same boarding house, "Langford", in Port Elizabeth where we stayed. In course of conversation, he stated that bee farming, in his opinion was the most profitable branch of farming. He is an engineer and a great friend of Ernest's. Last evening we took our supper out to "Egg Rock" and spent the evening out there with the young people from the "Poplars". Mary went out too, and as Ethne wanted to walk back with the "young ones", she changed places with Joan who had a sore foot and I think we all enjoyed ourselves to the full. (Excepting that we all over ate ourselves!) This afternoon, Mom, Mary, Ethne and I went out to Mrs Hartman's farm for tea. Ethne amused the children (Mr Radford's) by doing jigsaw puzzles with them. (She must keep in with the "Boss" you know!)

Dot refers to the forthcoming visit of Mr & Mrs Sydney Geard to Potgietersrus. She is a very fine singer. Joe and Blodwen are going to the Johannesburg Exhibition next week. Grace is very busy with preparations for the church fete early next month. I hope it will be a very great success. Rev Mogg's brother of Kuruman is often in Potgietersrus, and is using Reg's car for a trip. We understand that Reg is taking over the management of a business in liquidation. Their new address will be Box 16 instead of Box 10. Dulcie Moorcroft is in hospital still, and is making good progress. Her mother, Aunt Annie Bertie, is laid up in town too. She is getting on nicely.

Uncle Herbert is evidently getting weaker and is handing over the management of the farm to Uncle Jack. He gets up every day but does not knock about nearly as much as before. Mom says it's time I stopped, so I had better be an obedient husband. Aunt Eliza's cold is better. We are sorry to hear that Aunt Emmie has had another giddy attack at Durban. Doctor says she must not go to Maritzburg. Muriel is having an operation on Sunday next. Many happy returns to Grace on 2<sup>nd</sup> instant, Douglas 4<sup>th</sup>, Kingsley 12<sup>th</sup> and Ruth 20<sup>th</sup> (what a mess) Very sorry.

Love Dad

Thanks for your letter Cousin Douglas, everything is OK so don't worry, "Ethne".

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
7<sup>th</sup> October, 1936

Dear All,

After three weeks absence we are very glad to have our maid back. Mrs Heathcote has decided to live in Port Elizabeth so as to be with her daughters. They are trying to sell their property.

On Monday (bank holiday) we motored to Fish River to see Uncle Herbert who is very far from well and so did not come in to dinner but had something in his room instead. He has given over the management of the farm to Uncle Jack, and does not even go out much except to the station. We went over to see Uncle Gervase's new house which he hopes to finish by the middle of November. We had afternoon tea at "Highlands", Willie Saunders', returning home by half past six after spending a very enjoyable day.

On Tuesday afternoon, I acted as Commissioner at the nurses' examination. There was only one candidate and involved sitting for three hours whilst she did the paper. This is the most remunerative job that I have had, as I am entitled to a guinea. I hope the girl passes. Whilst sitting there, I wrote a long letter to my brother Willie and on my return home, found a letter had just arrived from him. I am glad to say that Rev and Mrs Barnes are returning on Thursday. We understand, however, that Mr Barnes will not be well enough to resume all his ordinary duties. It will, however, relieve me of much work in arranging pulpit supplies etc. It has also cleared the way for our proposed holiday. Grace writes that I may get a lift by car to the Maritzburg Conference by joining delegates from Kroonstad.

Aunt Emmie's doctor has told her that she must not risk going to Maritzburg having recently had another heart attack. This being so, it seems useless her staying in Durban and so it is suggested that perhaps she will return to Cape Town by sea in which case I would be prepared to go with her as far as Port Elizabeth. This would bring me to about the date which the doctor suggested for my third operation, which he says will only take four or five days, possibly a week, including fitting my glasses. I could then return to Kroonstad and join Mom there, proceeding later to Dorothy and Douglas. It therefore seems probable that we may leave here about Wednesday or Thursday of next week for Bloemfontein. A fresh development has opened today as Alison's sister and her husband are expected to arrive from England in about ten days time and look to spend 8 weeks in Cradock. It has been suggested that perhaps they may occupy our flat for that time. Nothing definite has been arranged so far but it seems a possible arrangement. This afternoon, Mary, Ethne and I had our first swim at the warm bath (which ain't so warm!). It has been the hottest day this summer, 90 degrees on the stoep.

Ethne is taking lessons in shorthand in view of her appointment by Rev Wellington at Healdtown next January. (Looks as if she had better learn to type as well! What do you reckon?)

Uncle says I must finish this as he is now going to take his annual! I'm really sleepy and I expect you all are too after reading all this exciting? news so will say goodnight.

Heaps and lots of love

Dad

Since writing the foregoing, Mom feels that we ought to get away as soon as possible and visit you all. Personally, whilst wishing to see you, I fear it will not be very enjoyable for you owing to my infirmity. However, I will not oppose so if it is convenient to you, we propose leaving between 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Joe and Blodwen will be back from Johannesburg about 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>. I intend going to Pietermaritzburg either from Bloemfontein or Kroonstad. After Conference, I will then return, join Mom and carry on to Dot and then to Douglas. We should be back here about the end of November. Please let me know by return if this rough outline will be convenient to you all.

Love Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
13<sup>th</sup> October 1936

Dear All,

Mom, Ethne and I have just arrived back from "Saltpansdrift" where we have been spending the afternoon with Uncle Herbert and Aunt Jessie.

Uncle Herbert is suffering a lot of pain but is very patient and tries to be bright and interested in everything. We stayed to supper, arriving back home at about 8.45. Mom is now having a bath and I will soon follow her bright example. We have been having lovely rains these last few days for which we are very grateful. It is drizzling now, and looks as if it is going to set in for the night.

Mom and I leave for Bloemfontein tomorrow night at approximately 11 o'clock. We intend to stay there with Joe and Blodwen until about the 23<sup>rd</sup>, when we will continue to Kroonstad where I will leave Mom while I go on to Maritzburg for the Conference.

Today is the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our wedding and we look back with much thankfulness to the blessings of the past. Grace writes that the party who was buying their plot has cried off which is a great disappointment to them. Douglas writes that they have moved into their new "mansion" and we're looking forward to seeing it before long but cannot make definite plans until after the operation. Ruth writes that she does not think that she will be able to go to the Exhibition although Denis is looking forward to doing so. We shall be interested in hearing from Joe and Blodwen what they think of it.

Uncle Gervase returned from Rooispruit today while we were out at "Saltpansdrift" bringing Uncle Owen with him. Aunt Kate is going to Johannesburg on Thursday to visit her "baby", and hopes to visit Vryburg on her way back. Uncle Owen is going up to Vryburg to see if he can get Eric fixed up.

If any of you have the chance of hearing Rev Owen Watkins on his tour for Toc H, be sure to take advantage of it as he is really worthwhile (and so says all of us).

I should have mentioned that Uncle Herbert can only get rest by sitting up at night. He can't go about at all now.

My letter must be short this week as I must still pack. I am taking my typewriter with me so will keep in touch with you all while I'm away. It is quite indefinite how long that will be.

Ethne will be staying with Mary for a time and later at the parsonage with the Rev and Mrs Barnes. She looks to go home next month for a well earned rest! Muriel's operation is so far satisfactory and I'm looking forward to seeing her when I go up. I shall try to look up Dossie Denison when in Durban. Rev J H Perry has asked me to stay with him. Amen

Lots of love,  
Dad

46 Glen Road  
Bloemfontein  
19<sup>th</sup> October 1936

My Dear All,

Blodwen is acting as my typist this evening (and a very bad one at that) and no doubt the recent improvement was noted since Ethne took over the steering wheel of the typewriter, the same improvement in spelling etc. (I don't think).

We left Cradock on Thursday night, Mary and Ethne seeing us off at the station at eleven pm. Although we had booked accommodation, we were annoyed to find this had not been done, especially as the train was full except two seats in different compartments. I shared with Mr Ronald Shone, a cousin of Ethne's, of course he did not know she was at the station. Blodwen and the babies met us and we were soon having breakfast. Owing to one of the workmen being off sick, Joe has had to take his place, and works all through the dinner hour, only getting home at five pm. This makes a long day for all concerned and by the time he has finished all his odds and ends, we are all ready for supper. One evening we went to a Church concert, but mom and I came out at half time as we were tired and it was quite impossible for me to see what was going on.

We were surprised to hear our old friend, the Rev W M Douglas, preaching in the local Methodist Church on Sunday evening. We had afternoon tea with him the following day at his son's house, the Surveyor General for the Free State.

We watched Joe play a tennis match on Saturday afternoon, his team winning the match by one game. I should like to see Douglas and Joe playing a match together. I could not of course see much of the game, owing to my eyes, but followed the gist of the game as well as I could. This afternoon, we went to see two old friends, with whom I stayed when I attended the 1907 Conference.

Grace writes that the motor trip to Maritzburg is off, so we look to leave here on Sunday morning and I will go by train to Natal on Monday. I wired to Aunt Emmie today to ascertain if she was going to Cape Town by boat and she replies that she has not yet made up her mind. We are glad to hear that Muriel is making good progress after her operation. Grace writes that Jean will have to have her tonsils removed as she is getting very deaf.

A number of Blodwen's friends are coming to see us this week. We are having some very nice rains and as I write, a nice fat thunderstorm is passing over the town. Dad is yawning his head off and mom is making discreet movements which means one thing – so goodnight good people and I hope you will be able to read this. It is ages since I played the piano of the typewriter (Blodwen).

Wednesday morning. Ethne is staying with Mary for a time and had secured a position as Secretarial Assistant to Rev Mr Wellington at Healdtown during his year of Presidency of the Methodist Church.

I shall not be able to write my weekly letter next week and perhaps not for a few weeks, during my operation, but will send you postcards from time to time. We are all well and send love to each and everybody as though names.

Dad

Kroonstad  
As from 53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1936

My Dear All,

I think my last circle letter was typed by Blodwen whilst at Bloemfontein about a month ago. Since then much has happened and Mom and I have tried to keep you more or less informed of the main happenings by means of postcards and letters from time to time. Now I am thankful to be able to say that I can see once more and hope to be able to renew my weekly contributions more or less regularly.

I am devoutly thankful for restored sight. It is simply wonderful what has happened since my last letter. It would only weary you to enter into all the details of the operations which I have been through but as I am visiting the family at present, I am able to convey to you such information as you may be interested in hearing. Suffice it to say that the last operation has been successful and I have now received my new glasses which enables me to see. I have two pairs, one for distance sight and the other for reading. Both are very powerful and heavy and will take me a long time to get used to them. At present I find it difficult to focus properly and to judge my distances. Walking down or up steps is very awkward. I also find that wearing either pair makes me feel dizzy and wants to make me react. Dr Steward told me that it would take me some weeks to get used to them so I must be patient. When using the reading glasses, I can only see things that are quite close to me but what a treat to be able to read even small type. I only got the glasses last Thursday and I have been reading more or less ever since. My distance glasses enable me to see everything outside. The first time I put them on, it was as though a miracle had been performed, everything was so clear. I feel sure that with a little practice, I shall be able to drive the car again. That will be lovely. Only my left eye has been operated on and the doctor has inserted in the frames opaque glass for the right eye so that it does not affect my vision. I do not know what the glasses or the operation will cost but whatever it is, I am thankful that it has been a success and that I can still be of some use in the world. No one will ever know what it has cost me in mental pain in not being able to do for myself as I have always been able to do. I find some difficulty in typing this but no doubt I shall get more proficient as time goes on. There is another great difficulty that I shall have to get used to – is the fact that when I look at a wall or steps or anything nearby, they are not straight or upright. I suppose this is due to the shape of the lens.

Well, I have said quite enough about myself. When I arrived here last Tuesday about noon, I was surprised to see Douglas, Evelyn and Leslie Hudson and his wife on the platform to meet me as well as Grace, Ted and the children. Douglas and Co had just arrived by car from the Johannesburg Exhibition and were on their way back to Vryburg. Mom had stayed at the house to meet Douglas and Co in case they came straight to the house. Grace only had ten adults and six children to dinner that day. Douglas and Co left for their home about three and we hear they arrived about 11 pm in Vryburg. We took Uncle Joe over the same route some few years ago and took twelve hours as against their 8. We have had rain almost every day since we arrived here, about six inches and have hardly seen the sun. I had much the same experience in Bloemfontein. The river here has been a sight for days. What a pity that so much water runs to waste.

We are looking to leave here about Thursday for Johannesburg on our way to Potgietersrus to see Reg and Dot. Now that I can see, it will be worthwhile. Everyone who has been to the Exhibition say it is very interesting. Dot will be there at the same time as she is going by car with a lady friend.

I must not attempt another sheet now as I have several other letters to write which have been waiting for a long time, so will stop for the present. Thanks for all good wishes which have reached me from time to time.

Much love to all from Dad

P O Box 16  
Potgietersrus  
December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

I am afraid that you will be thinking that I am living a very lazy life here. Well, that is about what I am doing. We left Kroonstad last Thursday morning and arrived at Johannesburg about 4.30 the same afternoon. Dot and Mick and Mrs Amm met us and Mrs Amm kindly took us to our lodgings at Yeoville. We were very comfortable there. We stayed to supper there and in the evening, the young son of the house took us on a nice short walk to the top of a hill overlooking the city. It was a fairyland sight seeing the miles and miles of street lamps and huge buildings where but fifty years ago, there was not a house.

Friday morning Dot fetched us and took us to the Exhibition, Mr Amm taking all of us again in his car. We "did" a good deal of the sightseeing that day and arranged to go again in the next afternoon and spend the evening in the grounds and see the illuminations. It was all very interesting and one could spend much time in writing about what we saw etc but as most of you have, or will see it for yourselves, there is no need for me to spend time in trying to describe what we saw. We watched the skating on real ice where two rival teams played a hockey match. It was very thrilling and pretty.

Mr Gilbert, Reg's former partner, kindly offered to motor us all back here so we left Johannesburg after dinner and arrived here about 7.30 the same evening. We encountered a violent storm about thirty miles from here. The rain was so heavy that we had to stop for some time in the middle of the road as we could not see. The water even got in from the bottom of the car but did not do any harm. Of course the car was a sedan so we were alright. I am glad to say the weather has been very nice since we arrived here. It has not been too hot but no doubt it can be.

We are glad to hear from Grace that Jean is getting over her operation. Did I mention the fact that we saw Mr and Mrs Farren in Kroonstad? He was on holiday recuperating after his motor accident.

Joe and Blodwen will probably spend Xmas in Bloemfontein. Joe is acting Charge-man in the works and does not think he can get away. He was thinking of getting my car and motoring over to Douglas' for a day or two whilst Blodwen went to her people. However we hope they will have a jolly time wherever they are. Reg and Dot will also spend Xmas quietly here. We are still looking to go to Vryburg about 16<sup>th</sup>.

I hope you have all seen Ruth's Xmas carol in the Xmas number of The Outspan. She won the £5.5s prize. I am glad Ruth and Denis are going to the Exhibition next week. Reg has not seen it yet but hopes to do so before it closes on January 15<sup>th</sup>.

We have not heard from Douglas since we arrived here. Hope they are all well. It is Lynn's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday tomorrow. We had a nice letter from her yesterday. Hope she passes her exam.

The children here are having their Sunday School Xmas party on Friday evening. There is great preparation going on.

Whilst at Kroonstad, I addressed my usual 350 Xmas cards and same will be posted from there.

I am glad to say that I am getting more and more used to my glasses. It is a treat to be able to read again. I must post now so will stop.

Much love to each and all,  
Dad



P.O. Box 16  
Potgietersrus  
December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

We are still here and enjoying the rest and quiet. There are advantages to be had even in a small place like this. For instance, we get our post at breakfast time. There is one passenger train each way daily. One arrives at 5 am from the south and the other leaves for the south at 11pm. We get the Johannesburg Star each morning. In fact, some mornings I have even read it whilst in bed. That shows how lazy I am. Most mornings, however, I am up in time and prefer to read the paper sitting on the beautiful lawn in front of Dot's house. There is a very large Syringa tree in front which gives a delightful shade early in the mornings. The sun rises about five so I have plenty of time to "do" the paper before breakfast. Reg generally goes to his shop about seven and comes home to breakfast at 8 or 8.30. The children have theirs early. We have dinner about one but Reg only comes from the shop at 2 - 3.

We have been favoured with nothing but good news since we left home. Jean, we are pleased to hear from Grace, is getting better after her operation for tonsils. Her ears are still not quite right. Harold had a nasty accident whilst we were still at Kroonstad. I do not remember if I mentioned it at the time. He was watching a native boy hammering a piece of iron when the hammer flew out of his hand and struck poor Hal on his forehead. He will have a nasty scar for the rest of his life. Hal seems to be almost as unfortunate as Ernest's Jeffrey. They are not going away for Xmas.

I think I mentioned last week that Douglas wired asking us not to come until after the 19<sup>th</sup> so we shall probably leave here about that date. You can post to us accordingly. Ruth is leaving for the Johannesburg Exhibition today. Denis is of course going as well. She writes to say that she had had so many congratulations on her success with her Xmas carol. She was speaking at her Sunday School last Sunday and the children sang the carol. Ruth and Denis will be staying at her sister's, Mrs Logie, 19 Hoy Avenue, Brakpan. Douglas' children will be going home from school today. They are taking some of their school friends with them.

It seems as though Joe and Blodwen will have a quite Xmas in Bloemfontein. For some time Joe has been acting as Charge-man in the works. He has not had manual work to do but finds the planning of the work to be given out to the men requires a good deal of thought and planning etc. It is all very useful experience for him. He says he has to take home yards of blueprints and work out all sorts of calculations and measurements. I hope this will lead to his permanent advancement. Blodwen would have liked to have gone to Cape Town but Joe could not get away under the circumstances. I offered them the use of my car if he liked to go to Cradock for it. Talking of cars, I am quite sure I shall be able to see to drive it again when I get home. I can see objects along the road quite far away now.

Reg went to the Exhibition on Tuesday night and returned this am. He quite enjoyed it. I have been offered a free seat down and perhaps I shall go. We did not use our railway tickets coming up from Johannesburg so it will not cost me anything to come back. On Wednesday I went to Pietersburg with some of the local members of the Methodist Quarterly meeting and attended same in the evening. I had lunch with Mr and Mrs Organelate of Vryburg. We did not get back until just midnight. I enjoyed the trip. Mom did not go. We have been to see Mrs Mogg who lived next door to Ruth and Harold at Kuruman. Her stepson was Minister there and they were very kind to them. She was saying Ruth asked her to cut Harold's hair. She did so. Her son – not the minister – is engaged in the Native Affairs department and is stationed here.

Again I am at the end of my paper and Dot says she want the table for dinner so I must ring off. Norman has been watching me do this letter and is very interested. He knows all his letters and counts up to hundreds.

Lots of love to you all  
Dad

P.O. Box 16  
Potgietersrus  
December 17<sup>th</sup> 1936

My Dear All,

It is Saturday afternoon and as Norman wants to see me typing, I may as well start my next week's letter early.

We have been passing through anxious times the last week or two. The news of the King's determination to marry a divorced woman has stirred the nation to its depths. It has been a great comfort to me that I have been able to read the papers and so keep in touch with the news of the day. Our next door neighbour, Mr Beaton, has very kindly asked me to come into his house and listen to the wireless whenever the news is on. I have taken advantage of this several times. Last night, Friday, Reg, Dot and I went in at midnight to hear King Edward give his final message to the Nation. It was very pathetic, but there is no doubt that he has done the best thing so far as the Empire is concerned. Evidently he is more concerned with his own love affairs than with the wellbeing of his people. However he came to be mixed up with such a woman is beyond me. I shall not be surprised if she does not throw him over as she has done her two former husbands. It is not likely that she will be satisfied to bury herself on a South American Ranch if she is such a fast society woman as reported to be. It was very noticeable that throughout the conversations, he made no reference to the religious side of the question. No mention that he had made it a matter of prayer for guidance.

Later, Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>. We have had plenty of rain this month and we were afraid that we should not be able to go and visit Willie Collett (late of Graaff Reinet district) who is farming about 76 miles from here. However we did go yesterday, leaving here at 7 am. Being a public holiday, Reg was able to motor us. It was a wonderful journey over a mountain about 5000 feet above sea level. The scenery was wonderful as we climbed up. The country is beautifully green after all the rain that has fallen. We were disappointed in not seeing Willie Collett but his wife entertained us very nicely. They get practically no visitors as the road ends at their place and it is a difficult place to reach. I am very glad we did go. It is a wonderful place and the fruit there will take a lot of beating. Mom says she has never seen larger or finer apricots. The difficulty they are up against is that they are so far from a market and the road goes over a high mountain. None of his brothers or sisters have ever been to see him and they do not get about much. One of their sons is working on a copper mine not far from here and Reg and Dot will try to get into touch with him. Mrs Willie remembers meeting Grace when she was governess at Mrs Sparkes in the Graaff Reinet district.

We have booked our seats to leave here Sunday night 11pm. We spend Monday in Johannesburg and leave the same night for Douglas. He is meeting us on Tuesday noon at Pudimoe Station and will take us via Eric and Freda, Mollie and Mike and Joyce and Frank. Of course we are looking forward to seeing all the family and the new house. Douglas has fixed up electric light all over the place. They are having a house warming this Saturday evening. Only three hundred invitations have been sent out and so far ninety have accepted. Of course, we shall arrive "after the ball is over". We have booked seats to leave Vryburg on Tuesday January 5<sup>th</sup> and arrive at Cradock on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> about 9 am. The church Minister is arriving on 11<sup>th</sup>. We shall have a couple of hours wait in Bloemfontein on the way home on Tuesday night, 5<sup>th</sup>. Glad to hear Ruth and Denis were seen at Bloemfontein as they passed through by Joe and Blodwen. I wonder if Joe and Blodwen won't join with Grace and Ted for Xmas.

I see I am at the end of my paper again so must stop with best wishes to all for the coming season and hoping you will all keep well and have a very happy time together. Rest assured we shall be thinking of each one of you.

Yours affectionately  
Dad

As from 53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1936  
Commenced at Warrenton Station 7am

My Dear All,

Mom and I are on our way to Vryburg and having to wait for a connection for a few hours so I may as well try to get up to date with my letter. We left Johannesburg last evening at 7.20 and arrived here about six this morning. The sun rose about 20 past five. It is not often we see this happen. It has the appearance of being a very hot day. We are waiting for breakfast to be served. I have often had a meal here in my Vryburg days. It is the same dining room that was in existence during the Anglo Boer War. The hole in the wall, which was made by a Boer shell which fortunately did not explode, is still covered by a piece of glass. So much for the introduction.

We left Potgietersrus about 11.15 pm on Sunday night, Reg seeing us off. We have enjoyed our visit very much. We have not laid ourselves out to accomplish much but the rest and quiet has been very refreshing. Their home is very comfortably furnished and is pleasantly situated several feet from the roadway. A large Syringa tree affords beautiful shade on the lawn in front early in the morning and it has been a pleasure to sit out in the shade and read the previous evening's Star. The little boys are up early playing about and are a constant source of amusement. They are growing fine little chaps. Norman will be six in a few days and there are talks of his going to school.

Dorothy is fortunate in having congenial neighbours. Mrs Watts, the chemist's wife, has three children on one side of her and the bank manager on the other side has two and they are also friendly. Mr Beaton, the manager of Barclays bank is a great friend of the Farrens of Pretoria. He very kindly invited me in to listen to his wireless whenever I liked. I took advantage of this during the King's crisis. Mrs Beaton kindly invited the Meintjes, formerly of Vryburg to meet us at morning tea. Dot also had friends in from time to time. It was nice having the company of the Gilberts, also formerly of Vryburg and daughter of Rev and Mrs Legg. On Sunday afternoon, the Gilberts and Watts joined us at afternoon tea on the lawn. There were eight adults and seven children. Each family contributed something towards the eats. It was a very happy occasion. In the morning I conducted service in the Methodist church as they only have fortnightly ministerial visits. Being the Sunday before Xmas Day, it took the form of an Xmas service and quite a few children were present. Mrs Watts sang a solo – Ruth's Xmas carol. It was very nicely rendered and was much appreciated. The collection went to the Epworth Orphanage. I do not remember if I recorded in my last week's letter the Xmas treat, Reg and Dot and others in the Sunday School arranged for the children. He made use of a trapdoor in the floor of the vestry which is used as a school room and placed a large packing case over it and used same as a sort of chimney. Dot used a fishing rod which she let down the chimney for Father Xmas to attach the presents for the little ones. They all enjoyed the evening. Of course they had lots of refreshments as well.

When we arrived at Johannesburg Station yesterday morning, Thera and her husband, Mr Mahon, met us and kindly took us to their flat and provided breakfast for us. As they are both working, they could not stop to entertain us but gave us the run of their rooms and also the key in case we wanted to come back and rest. We had previously let them know that we were coming as we knew that Eric and Freda and the others would be wanting to know how they were. After resting a while, we made a few calls and went to the Exhibition. We had communicated with Capt Upton hoping to see him but as he had a lot of business to do, he asked to be excused. We are having him with us for a few days in Cradock when we get back. We also let Ruth know our movements but her postcard addressed to Poste Restante was not forthcoming but fortunately we met her by accident in one of the sheds at the exhibition and saw a good deal of her and Denis during the day. They are both enjoying their stay at Iris at Brakpan. They are looking to pay a visit to Milner at Ladybrand and also Joe and Blodwen at Bloemfontein on their way back.

We are now at Grass Ridge, Douglas' new home. We are all going into Vryburg after breakfast so I am trying to get this letter finished before breakfast.

We left Warrenton on Monday about 10.30 and Douglas, Lynne and Cecily were at Pudimoe to meet us. The train was 35 minutes late but we were soon on the road to see Maude and Mike at Dwaal Vlaakte. The heat was intense. It had registered over 100 in the shade in Kimberley the day before and we later heard that it was 107 in Vryburg on Tuesday. The heat in Johannesburg on Monday, whilst we were at the Exhibition, was most trying and quite flopped us out. Maude's house is beautifully cool and is very comfortable. I must not stop to go into details as we are to go there again soon. Eric and Freda were both away but the twins and baby were there. Eric was doing some work at Joyce's home and Freda had gone into Vryburg to do some Xmas shopping. Joyce Tilly is very well and will be going into Vryburg in January. The twins have grown a good deal since we last saw them. Uncle Owen has been there and only returned to Rooispruit a week ago. We had dinner with Maude and Mike and enjoyed a nap afterwards. We waited some time for it to get a bit cooler before going on to Grass Ridge. Douglas made another call at a neighbours, Mr and Mrs Pringles. Mrs Pringle was a Miss Adams, daughter of old friends of ours at Warrenton. We arrived here about sundown. I am afraid it will take me too long to describe the house in detail so will just say that it is very fine indeed. They had the house warming party on Saturday last. They estimate that sixty cars were here and probably two hundred guests. A tragedy very nearly occurred during the afternoon. Some of the guests had been bathing in the circular reservoirs near the house and one lad about nine was missing. He had got out of his depth but Mike Meyer jumped in with his clothes on and got him out. Several others also got in. Douglas started artificial respiration and fortunately a doctor (a guest) arrived at the opportune moment and saved the child's life. Otherwise they seem to have had a very enjoyable afternoon and evening. The child and its parents stayed the night and returned home the following morning none the worse for its experience. There was a big demand for dry clothing as so many had got into the reservoir.

Last evening, Mrs Geard and her two daughters came out to supper and left after ten. It was very nice of them as they are very old friends of all of us. Mrs Willie Collett, who we went to see whilst at Dot's, is Mr Geard's sister. Mr Geard died a year or two ago. They have built themselves a new house in town and have their own motor. The eldest girl is engaged. Frank Short and his wife and baby and Arthur Collen and a young lady friend also came over for the evening. We are sorry not to have seen Eric or Freda but shall hope to do so in a few days.

There was quite a nice post waiting for us on our arrival and a long letter from Mrs Medhurst, widow of the former minister here, also a letter and card from Miss Kelly who recently saw Uncle Willie.

The heat yesterday was intense. Today I think it will be as hot as ever but that cannot be helped.

It is Xmas Eve and I understand we are having visitors tomorrow. I have slept on the stoep since arrival here. It is lovely. It is a great advantage having the electric light but as the batteries are charged by an air motor and there has been a shortage of wind, the light has to be used sparingly.

I must stop now and get dressed. I hope each and all will have very happy day tomorrow and that we shall soon hear how you all are.

My typewriter had a fall and is not working too well.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

Grass Ridge  
Vryburg  
As from 53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1936

My Dear All,

This will be my last letter to you all for this year. It has been a year of great happenings. The world still seems upside down. There are still signs of war and disturbances all over the world. The Royal crisis in England was disgraceful but no doubt good will come out of it all.

I have not time to dwell on political events except to say that it behoves all of us to keep cool heads and steadfast hearts.

Another Christmas has come and gone since I last wrote. I hope all of you have had a very happy time. I hope to hear how it was celebrated in each home in due course. Here we had a very happy time. Mr and Mrs Collen came to dinner and of course the children had a glorious time with all their presents. The most acceptable present so far as farmers are concerned was a shower of rain but not nearly enough to satisfy farmers. We did not go to service or have service here. We went to town on Xmas Eve and did some shopping. We were surprised to see how busy the town was. Before returning, Douglas motored us round the principal streets to see how the town has grown. There are any number of new houses and most of them quite stylish. The electric light in town has made a lot of difference. Of course I went through the old printing office which is much the same as when I left it ten years ago. Everyone seemed pleased to see me and many remarked that I was looking younger than when I left. This also applied to Mom. The Congregational Church, where we used to worship, has been sold and a new church erected. We have not seen the inside of it yet. Of course we have seen Mrs Rodger and yesterday she came to dinner and returned in the evening.

Thursday, December 31<sup>st</sup>. Yesterday we went over to see Eric, Freda, Maude and Mike and Joyce and Frank. We had dinner at Maude's and after a rest, went on to Joyce's. She is keeping very well and looks to come to town shortly. They have moved into their new home but it is far from finished. Some of the floors are not down and doors have to be put in. It must be very awkward for her under present conditions. Eric is going over to give a hand to get things straight.

We passed through the farm that Eric hopes to be able to purchase. It is about half way between Maude's and Joyce's. Government is so painfully slow coming to a decision about letting them have it. I am glad to say all the families are well. The children look the picture of health. Maude is so fond of them and helps a great deal. Uncle Owen has been staying with them for a while and is now back again at Redlands.

We got a letter from Joe yesterday saying he had gone to Cradock and taken my car to Bloemfontein. Roy went with him. Douglas is phoning to him this morning when we go to town presently suggesting they motor over here for the weekend. It will be nice if they do. We shall probably know before we return.

Mrs Legg is arriving in town today on her way back to Graaff Reinet. We are to have morning tea with her in town and will meet the Metcalfs and other old friends. Mom got knocked up last evening travelling back in the dark but is much better this morning. I do not know when I shall write again but will do so as soon as possible next year. We are looking forward to having Reg, Dot and children with us about the third week in January. Goodbye for this year.

God bless you all  
Love from Dad