

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
Monday January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

It is Monday morning January 1<sup>st</sup>, and I want my first letter to be to you all to wish you much joy and prosperity during the year upon which we have now entered upon. We all have much to be thankful for during the past years, as the Psalmist said "surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life".

Joe and family left for home at 6.20 pm yesterday and at 3.45 a.m. this morning our telephone bell rang and Joe reported their safe arrival in Bloemfontein, nine and half hours doing practically 300 miles. He spoke from Bloemfontein Post Office on his way home. He said they had one puncture and had to change the wheel. They were all very tired, of course, but I hope none of them will be any the worse for the trip. It was Joe's idea travelling by night so as to avoid the heat of the day and the children could sleep in the car. We both spoke to him on the phone. We shall be glad to hear details of the trip in due course.

I think I had better send this as a "special" edition instead of keeping it till Thursday. To continue our doings during Joe and Blodwen's visit. One afternoon we motored out to Kat Kop as they had not seen them on this visit. The thermometer was standing just over 100 in the shade but we all stood the trip without excessive discomfort. All except Uncle Norman were at the lower farm so after a refreshing cup of tea, we went down to see how the others were getting on with picking their apricots. The crop is very good this year but some of the trees are affected. It was still hot but as Joe and Co had not been to Uncle Gervase's, we followed on and paid them a short visit. Their home and surroundings are very pretty and developing according to plan. Barbara was not at home. The young people seem to be having a full round of dances etc.

We have spent some evenings looking through old photographs some of which I hope to send round to those concerned. We had the pleasure of a short visit from Rev and Mrs Legg on their way back from Queenstown. They stayed to dinner. They both seemed very well. Their trip to England during this year is off owing to the extra expense etc.

Did I tell you in my last letter that Douglas phoned from Vryburg and says they will try to pay us a visit after the school holidays? We shall be glad to see them. Grace and Dot phoned from Kroonstad and we heard them quite distinctly. Reg telegraphed his greetings. I am sorry I forgot to mention his birthday at the correct time but hope he had a happy day in spite of being separated from his family. We are glad Grace and Dot are having such a nice time together. We wish they could include us in their programme. The children all seem to have had a good time what with presents and school prizes they have done very well. We hope to hear how Douglas and family spent the day.

Joe went to morning service with me yesterday morning. Blodwen was asked to sing at the evening service but did not see her way to do it this time. Baby needs her attention and not only that, they had decided to leave for home about six, which as I have already stated, they did. Mom and I went to evening service. We did not stay up to see the old year out but I set the electric alarm for 11.30 so as to listen to General Smuts who gave a New Year message which was very clear and sound. I have already told you of Joe's phone call at 3.45 a.m. so will not repeat.

It is now afternoon, I have not been out of the house all day. Aunt Letty came along in the morning and stayed to dinner. Mom has gone with her and Mary to visit Mrs Joseph and others so I am finishing off this letter for posting tonight.

We are anxious to hear how Denis is as Ruth reported that he and another had fallen off a wagon at Happy Valley and the wheel had gone over Denis. We sincerely hope no serious injury has been caused. I find that my voice has nearly left me today but I expect it will be alright tomorrow, at any rate I hope it will be. Stores and offices are closed until Thursday but I don't expect we shall do anything out of the way. The rest and quiet will do me good so far as my voice goes. Well I sincerely hope that 1940 will bring us all peace.

Much love to each and all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Wednesday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

As we are having a few friends in to morning tea on Thursday morning and I have a special Council meeting and another meeting in the afternoon, I shall not be able to do much writing so will post this after dinner today. As I am typing this, I am listening in to London (6 a.m.). I have just heard of the sinking of the Dunbar Castle just as she started on her voyage to South Africa yesterday afternoon. This is the first S.A. vessel to suffer. All passengers were saved but the Captain was killed.

You will want to know how we got on at Fish River during our weekend visit. I am glad to say that my voice is much better and I am not suffering so much from "that tired" feeling which is so frequent amongst a certain section of the South African population. The rest has done us both good. The journey out was very trying. The temperature when we started was 103 in the shade and the dust and wind blowing into the car was as if we were standing in front of a huge furnace. Fortunately the trip only takes about 45 minutes so it was soon over. I took out some work – the indexing of one of the church registers and completed the 680 names in it. We had a restful time, we did not even go as far as Uncle Gervase's or Retreat. We did go to Grass Ridge on Sunday afternoon for tea, Mr Barnes taking us there in Aunt Jessie's car. I went as far as the station with Mr Barnes in the morning with the cream cans and one afternoon I walked there and back to post some letters, no car being available. Uncle Norman came over once or twice and Aunt Gladys also called on her way to Retreat to see Edith who is returning to her home in Breyten this week.

Later. Letters from Joe and Blodwen report that they found everything in order at home, the house swept and garnished. It was a man who lives next door to us who kindly put them on the right road at Naauwpoort when they were returning. I have seen him since his return and also thanked him for his kindness. He was here today putting our electric stove right. Blodwen has written some lines "on our garden". I have not time today to type them for the perusal of you all but will try to do so by next mail. They are quite good. Thanks Blodwen. Thanks too for birthday greetings from all who have remembered the eleventh. I realise that I am getting on in years and have much to be thankful for. If I am spared to be of any use to anyone for a longer or shorter period, I shall be thankful. I appreciate the gifts that have come my way but really you should not spend money on me. I will try to write personal letters to you all in due course.

Ruth reports that Denis is much better and is with her for a time before he goes to Oudtshoorn for a month's military training. He has done splendidly in his first year's B.A. examination. He writes that he has quite recovered from his accident. Ruth will be in Grahamstown to live after 24<sup>th</sup>.

Douglas and Evelyn write that they had a fairly large party at New Year and all enjoyed the dancing on the stoep. He hopes to have 250 new calves by June. They are looking to go to Pretoria this week and take Kingsley to school. We are glad to hear Mrs Ambler is out of hospital. Cicely is going to Eric Fear's school about 22nd. We had a sweet letter from her as well.

Grace writes that Reg was expected to arrive on Sunday and leave with Dot the next day for Vryburg on their way back to Potgietersrus and picking up the children who have been staying with Leslie and Gwen. Ted's two boys have earned a little pocket money by assisting the local postmen delivering the Xmas mail. They were paid 2/6 a day.

Aunt Eliza has ordered a wheeled chair in which she hopes to be able to get about a bit. I hope it will be a success and that we shall see her here more frequently than in the past.

Since our return from Fish River we have knocked off our early morning ration of tea. They have breakfast at Fish River at seven.

The heat is very trying and the rain keeps off. Clouds come up daily but no rain. We are thankful the nights are for the most part beautifully cool. Must stop now, lots of love to you all from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Friday January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I feel that it is due to you to send another "special" edition as you have all been so thoughtful in remembering my 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In addition to this, I have been appointed by a special meeting of the Council held yesterday afternoon to proceed tomorrow morning to Cape Town to confer with other Municipal Councils regarding a request from the Government for Municipalities to make certain improvements to their aerodromes for the Defence Department. We, and others, have spent a good deal in making our aerodromes suitable and we resent going to further expense which we all consider is the duty of the Government. The Town Clerk accompanies me and I do not expect we shall be back before Wednesday or perhaps later.

You will want to know how our little party went off yesterday. We invited all the Councillors and their wives to morning tea; the heads of the different departments, and the Magistrate etc. In all about 37 were invited who were all invited over the phone. Nearly thirty came and we had quite a sociable time. Enid happened to be in town and saw me as I went to get the post and very kindly came along and very efficiently helped Mom by cutting up sandwiches etc. A very nice cake came along and others were. Mary also and Ernest's Joan helped us out. We did not let on before the event the nature of the function so most were taken by surprise. Old Mr Metcalf and married daughter and Mr and Mrs Garlake were amongst the crowd. Mr and Mrs Webster, Douglas' friends, thought we had arranged a surprise for them as they knew we were expecting Douglas and Evelyn soon. They thought they might have arrived. We wish they had been here. Everyone was very sociable and enjoyed walking about in the garden etc.

We were glad to receive a wire from Dot and "All" at Vryburg saying all were well and sent greetings. She also stated that they were leaving for home today (Friday). I expect they are on the road as I am writing this (6 pm). I hope they are not having it as hot as we are. Expect they are arranging to spend the weekend with Trixie and home by Sunday or Monday. We also had a good news telegram from Kroonstad and letters from each home, for all of which much thanks. Aunt Eliza kindly sent me a framed photograph of a piece of needlework made by my Grandmother in 1806 when she was only 12 years old. I expect you have all seen it hanging up in her sitting room. A number of letters, including one from Rev and Mrs Legg, have arrived and numerous personal greetings.

I feel very humbled at all these tokens of affection and respect and quite unworthy for all the kind things which have been said. Rev Weavers came to the social and aging in the evening and had family prayers with us. I was saying to Mr Metcalf that I shall be thankful if I am spared to reach his age (86) and be as active as he is.

Of course I am looking forward to seeing Aunt Emmie on Sunday afternoon and the various relations in and around Cape Town. I have not let them know that I am coming. Aunt Letty and Mary are coming to stay with Mom whilst I am away. Aunt Letty is returning to Graaff Reinet next Friday.

Grace has sent us some snaps of herself and the children. They have come out remarkably well. They are growing quite big children. Evelyn has also sent one of Cecily taken in the flower garden. She too has grown a lot since last we saw her at East London. Douglas and Evelyn, Lynne and Kingsley are going to Amblers this or next week and Cecily is going to school at Eric Fears.

My postal address until next Wednesday will be c/o Grand Hotel, Cape Town.

I did not expect to fill a sheet but am glad to have this off my mind before I leave. Again I thank you all for all your kind wishes. The children's letters have given me much pleasure and I congratulate them on the way they are improving. I have not attempted to start answering my Xmas letters but must make a definite attempt when I get back.

God bless you all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Please note my Box number is 141  
Sunday January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I am glad I posted to you early last week as I could not write my usual when I got back from Cape Town on Thursday night.

The Town Clerk and I left by the 7.25 a.m. train on Saturday and it proved to be the hottest day of the season. We had three hours to wait at Naauwpoort in terrible heat. I tried to get Aunt Rosa on the phone but she was not at home. Mrs Eric Maskell said she was away at Mrs Oar's farm and they have not got the phone there. I got in touch with one of my old Sunday School boys, Milton Wilmot, who is running a large business there. He and his 24 year old daughter came to the station and we enjoyed a chat on some of former day experiences. The daughter is a teacher and is taking up a new appointment at Mossel Bay. We arrived in Cape Town about three on Sunday afternoon and after a bath, I went out to see Aunt Emmie. I had not let any of them know that I was coming so I went to Gladys first as I did not know the way to Emmie's new home. I found Gladys and Tom busy finishing off the painting of their drawing room which the painters had left that morning. They phoned to Auntie, who of course was as greatly surprised as they were to see me. I had tea with Auntie and slept the night there. She has quite a nice little house, not a modern one, a small garden in front, three rooms and kitchen. In the evening we went to see Joyce and Dudley in their new flat but as they had visitors, I did not see over it. They seem very comfortable. Their visitors had recently returned from Germany where they were told by some Germans how sorry they felt for South Africa having soldiers billeted on them. It shows how uninformed the population must be. Another evening we called to see my old friend, Rev Hornabrook who is in his 90<sup>th</sup> year. He is still very active for his age. He told me of his experience over their Xmas dinner. He had been laid up for a few days and he asked his doctor if he thought he would be able to go to dinner at Fletcher and Cartwrights, who specialise for such occasions. Dr gave him permission so off the family went. This was Xmas day evening. They found the shop closed so went to the back door which was also closed. So they made enquiries of passersby and found to their amusement and of course disappointment that the dinner had been arranged for the Saturday evening before Xmas. He was very grateful for what I had done in connection with the sale of property in which he was interested here. We also called to see Alison and her daughter Dorothy and husband but their flat was all shut up so we missed them. Alison is expected back here this week.

Mr van Heerden and I spent some time at Simons Town. The Town Clerk there had exchanged some succulents and we were interested in seeing how they were getting on. The Mayor very kindly placed a car and official at our disposal and we had a good run round the port. Of course everything is very closely guarded and no one is allowed inside the docks. We were informed of a good deal of what was happening which it would not be right to repeat in writing. We had a cup of tea at an hotel and strange to say, we met an old Vryburg man who was in the C.I. Department and is now on pension. He was pleased to see me again. His son is Deputy Mayor of the town. He, the son, came to the station to see us off on Wednesday but I am sorry to say he was the worse for liquor. He was very profuse in reminding me that when in Vryburg in 1923, I put a paragraph in the Northern News respecting his being the first Vryburgite to be awarded the Humane Society's Certificate for something he had done. I cannot remember the details now but think he was correct. It is strange how small the world is. Mr Galvin, Mayor of Vryburg, was also at Simons Town on holiday but we did not see him. The business which took us to Cape Town occupied most of Tuesday and Wednesday morning. It is evident that Government is going to erect some 40 or 50 airports in the Union and we have no doubt that one will be placed here. One of the Government officials who attended was the first flying man to come to Vryburg and I went up with him in his machine – the only time I have ever been up in the air. He remembered the incident. The Cape Town Municipality also provided us with transport to inspect some of their uneconomic houses which was very interesting. It was only

after getting the assistance of the System Manager of Railways that we were able to get away. The System Manager called up one and another of his officials and they just had to make room for us. The result was we had a compartment to ourselves all the way. There were 30 passengers on the train. Uncle Owen, Aunt Kate and Beryl were on the platform at Rosmead seeing Beryl off to Fish River. Miss Gedye was also with her. They have since been in town and we had four of them to dinner on Tuesday. Our train was an hour late but Mary had stayed up for me. The heat had been dreadful all day until we got to Naauwpoort when we had a shower. Aunt Letty was off to Graaff Reinet by 5.30 the next morning and Mary left the same day as she was called back to attend to old Mrs Biggs. The lady they got when Mary left was not satisfactory. I expect Mary will now stay until Mrs Biggs passes away. They had a little party whilst I was away and all three ladies had a good time. Tuesday afternoon we had a call from Mrs Walker, Grace's friend of Kroonstad. We also had Olive and Mildred with us so we were not lonely that day. Cyril called for them later. They had been to Port Alfred to see if they could find a suitable place for Uncle Walter but nothing was suitable. He is not able to walk and just lives outside in a chair. He is very deaf and cannot enter into conversation very well.

During my Cape Town visit, I called at the YMCA and met the new Secretary since I resigned. The staff was pleased to see me and I went over part of the building. I had not time to go over all of it. I met a man and wife who we knew at Observatory church, Mr and Mrs Hopkins. They reminded me of the occasion when a preacher did not turn up to take the service and the steward came to where I was sitting in church and asked me to officiate, which I did. It was very nice to meet them again. The work seems to be developing. One of Rev W.M. Douglas' sons is on the staff.

I must not forget to congratulate Douglas and Evelyn on reaching their 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of their wedding day on 29<sup>th</sup> of this month. Also to congratulate them on Lynne's passing her matric. I looked for her name when the list was published in Cape Town and did not spot it, otherwise I would have sent her a wire as I did to Jeffrey. Lynne is now taking a course of Commercial study in Johannesburg. Cecily has gone to school at Eric's and with Rex at Kingswood, there will only be Arthur at home. Rex is due to pass here on Monday night.

Ruth is now back in Grahamstown. Her address is c/o Lexham Private Hotel, High Street, Grahamstown. Denis left for Oudtshoorn camp for a month's military training yesterday. He seems to have got over his recent accident very well. Ruth and he have been enjoying fishing whilst at Port Alfred. Ruth caught a snake. Perhaps that was better than catching a whale.

Grace reports children going back to school and all well, baby growing and the admiration of all. Dot is glad to be home again after her visit to Kroonstad and Vryburg. The journey from Kroonstad to Vryburg which took Uncle Joe and us a whole day, they did in about six hours.

Congratulation to Blodwen on having one of her contributions accepted by the Outspan. We have not seen it yet.

The most important news of the week is that Aunt Eliza has been out in her wheeled chair. Mr Thomas has taken her and no doubt I shall have the pleasure also. She was out in it both morning and afternoon yesterday. They came here between five and six. She did not get out of the chair but came at the side gate to the back and went through the garden and every room in the house and seemed very pleased with all she saw. Our opposite neighbour asked us in the evening "what is the matter with Mr Thomas' wife!!!" He enjoys taking her out and is most attentive. Unfortunately she was a little husky when here.

I must close with a story about Raymond. Joyce suggested they should take a walk to the zoo. His reply was "what walk!!!" Of course he is used to going about in his Dad's car. Must conclude with thanks to all for letters received. Am glad to say we are both keeping well.

Love from Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

You will be anxious to hear what has happened to us as a result of the storm last Thursday afternoon and in connection with same, a broadcast message was sent over the air that we had experienced from three to five inches of rain in half an hour. No doubt we did have a very heavy storm but not quite so bad as that. It was purely a local storm. It did not reach much further than Marlow and Uncle Bertie did not get it at Spielmanskop. Paul's River did not get it but at the Council's farm, Houltzhuisbaaken, about 20 miles out, they caught it properly. Mom and I watched the storm coming on from the north-east and I remarked that there was hail with it. It came up against a strong south wind, which as a rule drives the rain away. I have noticed on former occasions when we get rain against the wind, it is generally heavy. This was no exception. I chalked a mark on the tank the depth of water just as it commenced to rain (5.25) and in a few minutes it came down properly. The ground between the back stoep and the garden was soon a sheet of water but fortunately the furrow by the side of the garage carried it off without it running through the garage, as I expected it would do. In fact the water was running away both sides of the house and out of all three gates into the street. Fortunately the force of the wind lessened to some extent but quite a lot of leaves were knocked off the vines and some bunches were blown down. In an hour, two inches of rain had fallen. I had to wade through the water to get to the rain gauge. I afterwards measured the tanks and found that all seven of them had risen by eleven rungs of the corrugations and the water was within a foot of the top of all of them. You probably know that all the tanks are connected at the bottom so fill automatically. The house leaked over Mom's writing bureau in the dining room and in the work room, it also leaked rather badly on the table but did not do any serious damage. Fortunately it was daylight. The back veranda leaked badly and the stoep by the kitchen door was flooded. Several houses in parts of the town were badly flooded and claims are being sent in to the Council for damages. Some of our streets and foot walks have suffered a good deal and it will take the Council some weeks to get things straight again. Several million gallons of storm water broke into the new reservoir that is in course of construction and the contractor expects to be compensated. The most serious damage seems to have occurred on the farms over which the storm passed. The town water supply pipe track was badly damaged in four places, the line being torn open and pipes broke in four different places. Pipes (cast iron) were carried away some hundred yards or more. It will take us some time to get things normal again.

Wednesday early morning. Since typing the above, we held our Council meeting last evening which lasted till 11 pm. Aunt Eliza's house leaked in some places but not as badly as before. Mr Thomas has taken her out in the chair again and on Sunday morning after service, I went up to see her and found her out. Later they called here on their way back from having been to the cemetery and park. I shall probably be taking her this afternoon somewhere.

On Monday evening we saw Rex at the station. Am pleased to hear that all were well at home and that Lynne had passed her matric examination. She is now in Johannesburg taking a commercial course. Kingsley is in Pretoria and Cecily is at Eric's school. Only Arthur is at home. Rex could not give any idea as to when his parents may be coming down. We loaded him with a good supply of figs from our garden. Denis has gone to camp and we hope he was not involved in the accidents which occurred at Oudtshoorn in the same sort of storm there which we had. He earns 5/- a day whilst in camp. Merle is now going to school and after the first day, is enjoying it.

Thursday morning. Well, yesterday afternoon we took Aunt Eliza up to the Old Ladies Home to see Aunt Charlotte. They had not seen each other for more than a year and were pleased to meet again. We also called on Mrs Kissick, Miss Hawkins, and Dulcie Moorcroft. All were pleased to see each other. We shall repeat the excursion again whenever she wants to go anywhere. Letters from Grace and Dot report much as usual. There is a school bus which takes Grace's and other children to school which is a great relief. Goodbye, lots of love, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

A good deal has happened since my last letter. Owing to difficulties with one of the contractors for making the new storage reservoir, it was decided that the Town Clerk, our local Attorney, the Town Engineer and the Chairman of the responsible committee and myself should go to Grahamstown to consult Counsel's opinion on certain points in the terms of the contract. We had decided to make an early start on Monday but as we had another heavy storm on Saturday afternoon, and finding that one of the rivers we should have to cross was in flood, it was decided to go over the mountain between here and Somerset East, which involved a detour of over 40 miles. We therefore left on Sunday afternoon and soon encountered rain and a bad road. We got through quite safely about nine pm. I had never travelled over some parts of this road, which is prettier than the direct route. I phoned up Ruth shortly after arrival but she had retired already. We had a long and busy morning with a King's Counsel and again in the afternoon. We were advised to go on to Port Elizabeth for further advice on certain matters so proceeded the same afternoon and got there about 8.30. I phoned up the Merrifields and learned that Mrs Price and Etta were expected to arrive the next afternoon by car from Cape Town. I also got in touch with the Blundsoms and arranged to stay with them when I go down next week to attend Friends' monthly meeting over the weekend. Our interview was soon over on Tuesday morning and we were able to start on the return trip by noon. I, however, took the opportunity of making an appointment with Dr Stewart for Saturday week as I want him to examine my eyes again. Between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown, we were able to render some help to a Mr and Mrs van Reineveld who had met with an accident on the bend of a road. Their car was badly damaged and they had to get help from Port Elizabeth. We had to complete the business with the lawyers before leaving for home and saw Ruth again for a few minutes. We picked up the canvas stretcher bed we had lent to Denis whilst he was camping at Golden Valley. He is due home in about two weeks time. He was not in camp when they had that storm in Oudtshoorn the first day they arrived. Ruth is very comfortably fixed up in the same room that Mom and I had when we went down for the Prize-giving. We were able to come back by the direct route as the river had subsided. We had covered 458 miles on the trip. I got home about 8.30 pm. I had, of course, phoned Mom of the extra trip to Port Elizabeth. Uncle Gervase's daughter, Pam, was here for a few days as she is sitting for the Civil Service exam today and tomorrow.

We celebrated Mom's birthday on Saturday afternoon by going to the bio to see the film "The Confession of a Nazi Spy". It was quite good. It was pouring with rain when we came out but we each had our umbrellas. Someone gave Mom a lift by car so no serious damage was done and neither of us have developed colds. Mom had three goodwill telegrams and letters from each of the family. Mom will write in due course. Mrs Wimble and her daughter, Mrs Rix, and Mr and Mrs Dodd and Nessie called whilst I was away. They had a good talk.

Yesterday I had a phone-call from Barkley East from Miss van der Walt's husband stating that she was in a very bad way and was not expected to recover. I am very sorry for them. Her mother is with her.

I should have said we had another two inches of rain on Saturday afternoon and all my tanks are full for the second time. Yesterday afternoon, we had a severe dry thunderstorm. Only ten points of rain fell.

I have a special Council meeting this afternoon and three other committees today so have done this before breakfast as I shall not have much time to do more. I am glad to say we are both keeping well. Our figs are nearly done. We have given away crowds. Our grapes are not looking too well, the hail storm did more damage than we at first thought. There are no grapes ripe yet.

After dinner. I have to be back at office by 2.30 so must close with dear love to each and all from Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
as February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

It is quite dark in the mornings when I get up (5 a.m.) but is undoubtedly the best time of the day. I generally retire about ten so have a fair quantity of rest.

Nothing very special has happened so far this week. The business for which I went to Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth last week is still in the air. Practically the whole of Saturday I spent with a consulting engineer on the site of the new reservoir and going into the details of the contract etc. I hope we shall not have a law case over it but in any case, it will cost a good deal to get matters settled up.

On Sunday afternoon, we took Aunt Eliza for a walk in her chair but it was very hot although we did not start until five. The heat has been most trying lately. Yesterday (Tuesday) it registered 103 in the shade and the nights too have been very oppressive. The world seems to be upside down in many respects. In Europe, extreme cold is being experienced, earthquakes are occurring in diverse places and excessive rains etc. We have had our roof seen to and hope it will not leak again although with hail, it is very difficult to cope with. Fortunately our house is very cool when you are in it but I often tell Mom, she may be very thankful she is not compelled to go out in the heat.

We are still eating our own grown figs, mealies, carrots etc. The grapes are just beginning to get ripe but owing to the hail, we do not expect such a crop as last year. It seems impossible to find anyone who will run the garden on their own account.

Thursday morning. I think I felt the heat yesterday more trying than ever before. Jacket, waistcoat, collar and necktie were all discarded (when at home) and one is in a bath of perspiration all the time. After the new service had come over, Rev Weavers and Mr and Mrs Webster (Douglas' friends) came in and we sat out under the vine trellis until a shower drove us in. A few showers have fallen during the night and I hope today will be cooler. It is not six yet so it is too early to judge. I have sported a white umbrella this year. I could not get one here or in Port Elizabeth but managed after trying a number of shops in Cape Town to get one. Aunt Eliza came down late in the afternoon when a dry storm was on but had to hurry away when a few drops of rain fell. I should be very sorry for her to get through in her wheeled chair.

We have for sometime been thinking and talking of going for a tour round to see you all. I am due to attend the Mayoral Congress at Aliwal North on April 9<sup>th</sup> and am arranging for Mom to accompany me. From there we may go on to Vryburg via Bloemfontein and then to Potgietersrus via Johannesburg and back to Johannesburg and on to see Sister Collett at Breyten and back to Johannesburg then Kroonstad and Bloemfontein and home. This is not definite and may not materialise. Matters here in connection with the dispute over the new storage dam requires careful handling. Our fruit will be finished by then. We have not heard anything definite from Douglas who said they might come down after the schools had reopened.

Blodwen writes that Joe is looking far from well, the heat must be very trying for him. She wants him to resign from the Railway and find work at Simons Town where his friend, who worked with him at Salt River, is working. New regulations at the works in Bloemfontein are causing dissatisfaction amongst the men. I wonder what he will decide to do.

Grace reports that baby has a tooth. He is far behind Blodwen's baby in that respect. Dot writes that she is quite alright now and frisky again. This is good news indeed. She has been seedy for a long while. I am wondering how the altitude of up country will affect me if we do go. I noticed the change as we went over the Zwaarshoek mountain between here and Somerset East last week. Tomorrow evening Ernest and I are going to some Friends meeting in Port Elizabeth. I shall return by Sunday night train as I have a number of committee meetings on Monday and Tuesday.

We are very sorry for our old friends, Mr and Mrs Dersley. Both have been laid up and unable to do anything for themselves. We are trying to find someone to look after them.

Lots of love to all, Dad



34 Dundas Street  
Cradock, Box 141  
as Thursday February 21st, 1940

My dear All,

Wednesday morning. Mom went to Fish River with Uncle Gervase by car on Friday afternoon and enjoyed her visit. We had rain during the evening but this did not prevent the Sunday School children from attending their prize giving function. After this, I left by rail with Ernest to attend meetings in connection with Friends. My hosts were Mr and Mrs Blunsom who live in Mill Park. I was very comfortable. They have three children at home. Mr. Blunson is an auditor and secretary to Sundays River Syndicate. Both Mrs and the eldest son assist in the office. In the morning my first call was on the head of the postal department to try to make better arrangements for telephones for Uncle Gervase and Aunt Jessie. I hope the arrangements discussed will be satisfactory to all concerned.

You will be interested in the interview I had with Dr Stewart. He carefully examined my "well" eye. He pointed out that a portion of the "capsule" in which the lens of the eye is contained had not "dissolved" and caused what he described as thin "threads" or "hairs" which laid across my vision and of course obstructed vision to a certain extent. He said these threads could be snapped or cut by he did not recommend my having it done. He was agreeably surprised at the smallness of the type I was able to read and thought that I would be well advised to leave well alone. He also examined my right eye, which was my best before the operations in 1936 but of course is now the worst. He says it is developing backwards as the other did. It could still be operated on but he does not think it necessary. It is my "distance" glass that has been causing trouble and he says he could prescribe a slightly more powerful lens but he does not think it would be worth the expense. So the net result of my visit is that I stay as I am. I am devoutly thankful that I have the vision I have as I should by this time be practically blind had I not had the operations.

The meetings we went to attend were quite interesting and I hope profitable. My past experience was, I hope of some assistance. A long discussion took place on peace and a great diversity of views were expressed. No vote was taken on the subject. Ernest and I were the only visitors from outside of Port Elizabeth. We were motored out to Seaview and entertained to tea at Addis Smith. I was appointed as Marriage officer but do not anticipate having much call upon my services in that direction. The return journey found the train rather full but the examiner kindly shifted me into a compartment by myself. I had two nights in the train and one in Port Elizabeth. I have been very busy since my return on Monday morning with committees. Mom arrived back shortly after me although I did not expect her until Tuesday. Tuesday evening I presided at a farewell social to members of the Defence Force who are going on a month's training. So far we have not had any comments re our proposed holiday arrangements, possibly letters will come today. I had a meal with Blodwen's sister, Mrs Merryfield. Mrs Price and Etta and brother were there. They are expecting Joe and Blodwen at Cape Town for Easter. Later. Letters from Grace, Dot and Joe came this morning. One from Douglas came a day or so ago. He reports the need of rain badly and does not see his way down here at present. He says one of their peaches weighed ten ounces. Some peach. I notice we have three grapefruit on the tree we planted. Next year there will be more I hope. This (Wednesday) afternoon we have had about fifty of Rocklands girl boards here. We invited them to come and help themselves to grapes and figs. The teachers came with them and they had a good tuck in.

I might have gone to Johannesburg in the morning over the trouble we are having with the contractors for the new dam but I have sent the Town Clerk and our Attorney and the Chairman of the Water Committee instead. Joe reports that Trevor has five teeth already. Some boy. Thursday I have to go to the Council's farm to inspect the damage done by the recent storms. Several earth dams are broken and much soil has been swept away. Our pipeline suffered considerable damage. I do not expect to be home for dinner so will post this in case I am not back in time. Much love, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. P.O. Box 141  
as Thursday March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940. Leap Year.

My dear All,

I hope you all remembered that it was Evelyn's birthday yesterday (Tuesday). I hope she had a very happy day.

Joe and Blodwen are looking to go to Cape Town for Easter and will be due back on April 1<sup>st</sup>. They hope to travel via Port Elizabeth on the return trip but will not break their journey here.

I was sorry to hear whilst at Port Elizabeth that Aunt Emmie was fearing eye trouble and asked for Dr Stewart's advice as to who was the best man in Cape Town to go to. He recommended Dr Townsend and Dr du Toit. The last named is the man who first put me on the track of the cataract. I hope to hear that there is nothing very seriously wrong. By the way, it was her 74<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Last Thursday afternoon we invited all the Rockland boarders down to have a feed of grapes and figs in the garden. About fifty came and two lady teachers with them. They said they enjoyed the feed and we think they did. There are plenty still left. It is harvest thanksgiving day on Sunday and Monday so we shall be sending some along there. I wish we could send all of you some or better still, that you could come and help yourselves.

I have been busy answering some of the letters received at Xmas time and still have about a dozen to do. By the way, can anyone suggest what would be a suitable way of disposing of the old cards? Many of them are very pretty and it would be a shame to throw them away. They would make nice scrap books for children in hospitals etc. if anyone had the time to do it. I am afraid that commodity – time – is not very plentiful so far as I am concerned.

Municipal troubles are not over yet. It was as well I did not go to Johannesburg last week as the delegates only got back on Monday and I had an appointment at the Baptist Church in the evening. I expect I shall have to go to Cape Town again on official business to get the Administrators consent to the new arrangements we shall have to make with the contractors over the reservoir. We are making a compromise which will cost the council a few hundred pounds. It would be of no interest to you to go into the details but suffice it to say it is no fault of the council as such but I suppose the council will have to foot the bill. I expect to have to go to Cape Town next week with the Town Clerk to get the matter put in order.

Last evening (Tuesday) I gave an official dinner at the Victoria to the retiring Magistrate and his wife who are leaving on transfer to Vereeniging tomorrow. Over 40 guests sat down and everyone seemed to have enjoyed the evening. Next week here will probably be another dinner to Hon van der Byl, Minister without portfolio, who is coming to open the Show.

Mr and Mrs Dersley have both been on the sick list for some time and their niece and others have been looking after them. The time has arrived for something more permanent being done and so it has been decided that they go back to Somerset East where their niece lives and who has secured a house and a man and his wife to look after them. They are both over 85. They live near to Aunt Eliza. We shall miss them very much.

The heat has been dreadful. Monday it was 103 in shade but yesterday it dropped to 86. Sunday was terrible. After service I was wet through with perspiration. Am sleeping out on the back stoep since Sunday. I still rise early and do most of my writing before breakfast.

Our maid had two days off to get married last week and has now asked to be relieved from coming back in the evenings to get tea and wash up. This is the first time she has been absent. Her mother supplied for her whilst she was away. Her father does the gardening three times a week and her mother the washing once a week so you see it is quite a family affair. Her younger sister also comes and helps sometimes. Letters came from Grace and Dot this (Wednesday) morning. Nothing special to report except that baby Charles has not any teeth yet and Dot was busy knitting garments for her boys. All were well. Not heard from Vryburg just lately. Mom had tummy trouble for a day or so recently but is better again now. Aunt Eliza is keeping well as she usually is. Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
as Thursday March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I am very sorry that I was unable to write my usual dear all last week owing to my being in Cape Town on official business. I think this is the first time for a very long while that I have missed. However I must try to make up for it this week. The Town Clerk, Council's Attorney, Mr Tunbridge of Metcalf & Co, and I left at 4.10 am on Monday 4<sup>th</sup>. It was quite dark and headlights were on for the first couple of hours or so. I had never been over the mountain between here and Graaff Reinet so was disappointed in not being able to see the country. In addition to this, a scotch mist was falling most of the time. It was quite cold. I was travelling in glad neck shirt and light suit but had my overcoat and rug and with three of us in the front seat, managed quite well. It took us just five minutes under three hours to cover the 88 miles. We reached Aberdeen, 34 miles in 50 minutes and had breakfast there. Our next town was Beaufort West, 98 miles, which we reached at 1.5 pm. We were delayed owing to the fan belt breaking on this part of the trip as Mr van Heerden had not the necessary means of rectifying it and there are no garages on this long stretch of barren country. However we managed after getting up speed for a little while and then slowing down for a time, in order to let the engine cool, to get it fixed up whilst we had lunch at Beaufort. I have never been on this section of the road, in fact had never travelled to Cape Town by car before so was interested in seeing the country. I dare say it is very good veldt but quite uninteresting so far as scenery is concerned. From here we passed through smaller towns without stopping as follows: Fraserburg Road, 47 miles, Prince Albert Road, 24 miles, Laingsburg, 52 miles, where we had afternoon tea. The scenery from here onwards to Cape Town is very fine. Matjiesfontein, 18 miles, and Touws River, 32 miles. From here, we crossed the Hex River mountains. We were disappointed to some extent as it is not so grand as where the railway goes down. I have often done the journey by train. The sun, by this time, was getting low and shone right in the windscreen which made it difficult to see anything. I called to mind the journey Joe and Blodwen took in their bus when he had ideas of going farming many years ago. They took the wrong road from Cape Town side and experienced a good deal of trouble. The scenery entirely changes on the south side of the mountain and reminded me more of English country towns. De Doorns is a pretty little place, well watered and highly cultivated, a famous fruit area. This was 27 miles from our last point and another 21 miles brought us to Worcester making a total of 441 miles for the day of 15 hours and half. We decided to sleep here as we were all pretty tired. The boy who carried our luggage into the hotel recognised me. He used to work at Louis Botha House and I took him to help us at the YMCA camp on two occasions at the YMCA hut in the Defence Force camps there. He afterwards left the Y.M. and has been working at the hotel for some years. They gave him an excellent character. I have a photo of him taken with Rev Perry and myself in our working garb at the camp. We left Worcester after breakfast on Tuesday and reached Cape Town 81 miles by 11.30, making a total of 522 miles for the trip. Not too bad for me in my 77<sup>th</sup> year.

Our business involved several interviews with officials on Tuesday and Wednesday and I am glad to say we got the information we sought. I was anxious to get back in time for our Show here but it seemed to be too much to attempt in one day as the Show opened on Friday. Invitations had been sent out for dinner which I was giving on Friday night to the Minister of the Crown who was coming to open the Show and was disappointed not to be present. However I saw him at the House of Parliament and explained the position and wired to the Deputy Mayor to do the needful and take my place. Neither of the others of our party had lived in Cape Town and were anxious to see something of the place and as I am more or less familiar with the surroundings after our residence of nearly nine years there, I was able to show them round a bit. Amongst others whom I saw was Miss Inglesby (Mr Metcalf's sister) who is confined to bed in a nursing home. Rev Hornabrook, who celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on Monday. We also went to Pinelands and saw Mr Phillipson of Cradock at the Brown Laurence Home. He is looking very well but his memory seemed to us to be failing. We took him for a little spin and then went

on to Wynberg to see a famous garden which Aunt Emmie had strongly recommended as being worth seeing. It was indeed a glorious sight. It belongs to a millionaire, Hugh Ferris, and is near Kirstenbosch Gardens. We also took Mr Tunbridge to see his aged mother who has been in a nursing home at Plumstead for some years. We did a bit of the Camps Bay Road and the Bay reclamation scheme of the foreshore at the bottom of Adderley Street. I also saw a number of my friends at the S.O.E. lunch club of which I was one of the eight who formed the club some years ago. I also met a Sunday School teacher whom we met at Durbanville years ago and who sent us a Christmas card containing the verse we used on our cards last Xmas. In all, we covered 145 miles in and about Cape Town. I spent two evenings with Aunt Emmie and saw Pat, who by the way is very happy there and at school. I invited all the members of the clan to morning tea at Fletcher & Cartwrights one morning. Seven of us met - Aunt Emmie, Gladys and Tom, Kathleen Vorster and Dorothy and Bob Murray. Joyce and Dudley could not come. Everyone seemed very well and happy. Cape Town is changing a good deal, immense new buildings are going up and the streets are being improved by the erection of many islands to regulate traffic etc. My dentist, Dr Reineke, wanted to have a chat but was too busy in business hours so made an appointment to see me after dinner one evening. After waiting for him till past nine, and being tired, I had a hot bath and went to bed. About 9.30 he and his wife came along so I was entertained in bed for an hour or so. He is a strange man but very clever and had always taken a keen interest in me. I enjoyed their visit. He sent me a wonderful letter at Xmas time. I could easily spend a month visiting my old friends and enjoying trips round the country where we used to go motoring a good deal.

We started on our return via the Garden Route and were soon on top of Sir Lowry Pass, 39 miles, a spot we had often been before. At Caledon, the road does not pass through the town which I think is a mistake so far as attracting business is concerned. Swellendam and Heidelberg were soon passed. At the latter spot I was reminded of the visit Joe and Green paid to the place about 11 pm on the occasion when Mom went by train from Cape Town to Great Brack River and stayed with the Olivers. The hotel was all left open except the bar and we helped ourselves to a bed as we could not find the proprietor until the next morning. That added another 104 miles. We pressed on through Riversdale and Albertinia, 43 miles, to Mossel Bay, 33 miles, and on to George, 59 miles. It was getting dark by this time but we felt we must press on as far as Oudtshoorn so as to lessen the journey for the next day. This added 40 miles, making a grand total for the day of 329 miles. Saturday morning we were off again for home via Willowmore and Aberdeen and Graaff Reinet. We had car trouble soon after leaving, this time the hooter started hooting and nothing would stop it until it was dismantled. Other defects materialised which delayed us for an hour and half at Aberdeen before they could be fixed up. I was hoping to get over the mountain in daylight as we missed the scenery on the outward journey. This delay prevented it and we only reached home by 8.30, having done another 282 miles. Thus the total journey, including 145 miles we did about Cape Town itself, totalled Cradock to Cape town via Beaufort West, 522, Cape Town to Cradock via Mossel Bay and Oudtshoorn, 611, and round about Cape Town 145, total 1278 miles.

At Aberdeen I tried to get into telephonic communication with Alan and Alice Biggs but found they were all away. We passed close to their house. The road from Aberdeen to Graaff Reinet is practically finished by the National Road Board and is in splendid condition. I know we touched over 70 miles an hour on parts of that road. I am glad to have done the journey but do not expect to do it again, at any rate not in such a hurry.

The Show dinner went off very well Mom says. She came home on Thursday expecting me to return that day. She did not get the wire I sent her to Kat Kop. I am glad she went to the dinner but did not go to the Show ball afterwards. She brought back some bottles of fruit which she helped preserve whilst at the farm.

Now for news about ourselves. I am sorry it will not be very bright but all the same you must know. I think I have said in previous letters that before finally deciding about taking a tour round, I would consult Dr Scholtz who has examined me on different occasions. So on Tuesday

morning we both went up to his surgery. Mom to have her ears syringed to see if that will improve her hearing and I to get his advice about going up country. The syringing was not pleasant but I hope it will improve matters as Mom has been getting very deaf for some time now.

I showed Dr the list of places we proposed visiting as follows:

Cradock is	2855 ft above sea level,
Bloemfontein	4568
Kimberley	4012
Vryburg	3893
Mafeking	4194
Johannesburg	5735
Potgietersrus	3865
Breyton	5887
Kroonstad	4491

All of these are much higher than here and he frankly said he could not advise my risking such altitudes. This is a very great disappointment to me and I am bewildered to know what to do or to say. I am sorry I did not ask him before making any suggestions about going away but I did not expect a bad report. He did not examine my heart this time but I suppose it is more or less the same. I noticed my ears buzzing when going over the mountains on my recent trip to Cape Town and even here I am always conscious of a drumming in my ears.

I can quite realise that there is no change for any of you to visit us here, you naturally want a change to the sea. I have suggested that Mom should go and see you but of course she does not like the idea of travelling alone.

Of course we are still looking forward to celebrating our Golden Wedding next year, if we are spared, at East London but that is a long way off and no one can count on the future. All the daylight I see at present is to wait for way to open and be content to live just a day at a time.

I can quite realise that you all will be disappointed, as I am, but it would be very awkward for any of you if I should be taken ill and be a burden on your hands. There I must leave matters for the present at any rate.

Joe and family leave for Cape Town on Saturday morning and I hope will have a nice holiday. They may pass through here on their return so we should see them at the station.

Ruth has been doing well at bowls. She has secured the appointment as secretary to a girls' club at £4 per month. Her work will only be in the mornings I think.

Douglas reports having rains and still hopes to run down to see us. No date is fixed but we shall be pleased to see anyone.

Grace says her baby is now 21 pounds in weight.

We hear that Trixie is going to see her mother at East London and is visiting friends at Grahamstown. We hope they will give us a call.

This (Wednesday) afternoon I opened Rocklands swimming gala at the warm bath. Heavy rain fell during the closing events but we had none in town. I think I must have tired you with this long letter but it gives me pleasure to write and I hope it gives you some pleasure to read it.

Very dear love to each as though named from your loving  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141.  
as Thursday March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

This week we are having an abundance of rain. As I write (Wednesday early morning) it is pouring. Yesterday morning I registered two inches and I expect over another inch has fallen since. My tanks have been full and running over several times this season in spite of the many prophecies that they never would be filled. I wish I had more tanks to fill. I think I shall be justified in building a reinforced tank at the top end of the garden, near the summer house, in which to store the overflow from the tanks by the house. We will see. I sincerely hope that the rain is general and that Grass Ridge (Fish River) is getting some as it is less than half full. It appears to be general as it has been falling so steadily. There has been a serious land slide below Alicedale which has disorganised railway traffic for some days. I expect it will upset Ernest's plans as he was going away for a holiday to Bushmans River mouth for Easter. The roads will be impassable in some places. School holidays begin on Thursday and some children will be unable to get to their homes.

On Monday morning we had a sad tragedy in town. One of my Councillors was found dead in his office. We had phoned for him to attend a Committee meeting but he could not be found. Subsequently his body was seen through a window lying on his office floor. The police took the matter in hand and it was quite evident that he had shot himself in the head, the gun was across his body. We have known for some time that he was in financial difficulties and was addicted to gambling and other vices. He told me some short while ago that he wanted to clear out and go to Rhodesia. He was buried Tuesday morning. All the Councillors attended as a mark of respect. His wife has had a great deal to put up with. There are two grown up children, one is training as a nurse in Cape Town. I do hope that none of you will ever yield to the allurements of gambling.

We took Mrs Hy McLeod with us to see the film of the Lion has Wings as we had heard such glowing accounts of same. It was quite interesting and shows what wonderful advance aviation has made in recent years.

On Sunday afternoon, I wheeled Aunt Eliza down here and back. She enjoys going out in her chair and I enjoy taking her. We may repeat the visit on Good Friday.

I am sorry to say that old Mr Dersley has had to undergo an operation for rupture in the hospital. He and his wife had left their house last week and were staying in our old house at the corner of Market Street with the Millers. They were to have left for their new home in Somerset East yesterday but he lifted a suitcase and this brought on an old trouble. He is 86. He has stood the "op" very well so far but will have to stay in hospital for a fortnight or so.

We hear that Uncle has bought a house in the new township so he and Olive will be staying in town in future. We hope this will be a suitable arrangement.

We hope to hear of the safe arrival of Joe and family in Cape Town. They were due there on Sunday evening.

Douglas writes that as the holidays are on he will not be able to come and see us just yet. We hope Evelyn will also come.

We have rearranged our bedroom recently, one bed stands each side of the window on the stoep and Mom's wardrobe is in front of the big window in the bay. The washstand is behind the door from the passage.

Letters from Grace and Dot suggest our taking a holiday at the coast for a fortnight. We will see after the Aliwal North Congress. Norman does not seem at all well. He is in doctor's hands. We hope to hear better news Thursday morning. There are no further developments re our holiday yet.

We had a flying visit from Ethne and her father and sister at the weekend. She has been very ill but is better. Lots of love to all.

Dad

Denis is 19 today. Ruth's article is in this week's Outspan.

## MISCHIEF MAKERS

Oh, could there in this world be found  
Some little spot of happy ground  
Where village pleasures might go round  
Without the village tattling!  
How doubly blessed that place would be,  
Where all might dwell in liberty,  
Free from the bitter misery  
Of gossips' endless prattling.

If such a spot were really known,  
Dame Peace might claim it as her own,  
And in it she might fix her throne  
For ever and for ever!  
There like a Queen might reign and live  
While everyone would soon forgive  
The little slights they might receive,  
And be offended never.

## TIS MISCHIEF MAKERS THAT REMOVE

Far from our hearts the warmth of love,  
And lead us all to disapprove,  
What gives another pleasure.  
They seem to take one's part, but when  
They've heard our cares, unkindly then  
They soon retail them all, again,  
Mixed with their poisonous measure.

And then they've such a cunning way  
Of telling ill-meant tales, they say:  
"Don't mention what I've said, I pray,  
I would not tell another."  
Straight to your neighbour's house they go,  
Narrating everything they know,  
And break the peace of high and low,  
Wife, husband and brother.

Oh, that the mischief making crew  
Were all reduced to one or two,  
And they were painted red and blue,  
That everyone might know them!  
Then would our villagers forget  
To rage and quarrel, fume and fret,  
Or fall into an angry pet  
With things so much below them.

For 'tis a sad degrading part  
To make another's bosom smart,  
And plant a dagger at the heart  
We ought to love and cherish,  
Then let us evermore be found  
In quietness all around,  
Where friendship, joy and peace abound,  
And angry feelings perish.

Copied, March 18, 1940 by Charles Butler, Cradock, Cape Province. (with apologies for typographical errors)
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34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
as Thursday March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Easter has come and gone. I hope all of you have had a happy time and no doubt have recognised the importance of the occasion. May the prayers of the multitudes for peace in our times be answered soon. For my part, I cannot see how Germany can carry on a long war.

I brought Aunt Eliza down on Good Friday morning and she spent the longest time with us that she has ever spent. We sat under the vines at the back stoep and afterwards brought her and the chair up the two low steps and through the house into each room. I shall make a sloping arrangement for the back so that it will be easier for the chair to be wheeled in and out. Of course she does not get out of the chair. Mr Thomas came for her – by arrangement – whilst we were having our dinner. In the afternoon we took a taxi and visited the Bladens – where we get the apples from. We took Mrs Hy McLeod and a Mrs Campbell, who is staying at the same boarding house as Mrs McLeod, who is a newcomer to Cradock and attends the Methodist Church with us. It was a beautiful afternoon and we quite enjoyed it. These people suffered tremendous damage by the hail storm we had at the end of January. So much so that their entire crop of apples was ruined and they fear it will be some years before the trees will bear again. The bark was knocked off many of the trees. We passed our old plantation home but did not go in.

Let me correct an error I made regarding Ruth's new job. It is not a Girl club that she has been appointed secretary to but the Settlers Club which embraces the elite of Grahamstown. The duties are only part time and Ruth will attend only in the mornings. Denis is spending part of his holidays on a farm with other members of the Oxford Group helping to repair a broken dam.

We have paid a few visits to Mr Dersley and Mr Barnes (Uncle Norman's manager at Saltpansdrift) both of whom are in hospital. No one has replied to my question made some time ago for suggestions as to what use could be made of old Christmas cards. I do not like the idea of just throwing them away. Now some of you brainy folk see what you can suggest.

Last week I had a long interesting letter from one of my old staff in Cradock about 40 years ago, a Miss Alden. She was a friend of Aunt Katie Crew if I remember correctly. She returned to England years ago. She paid a visit to South Africa in 1934 but was told that there were none of her former friends here then. She is employed in the British Post Office.

We did not make any plans for spending the long weekend at the farm as we usually do for which I am sorry. We had a wedding to attend on Saturday morning so we rested a good deal. Yesterday (Tuesday) we had five extra to dinner, Aunt Jessie, Uncle Norman and Aunt Kate, Pam and Amy Collett. The latter two are spending a few days with us as they are taking shorthand and typewriting lessons in town. Uncle Norman also called in the afternoon. So we have not been altogether lonely. Rev Wavers had dinner with us on Monday as his wife and family are away on holiday at Port Elizabeth.

Joe writes from Cape Town that he has applied for a transfer to Salt River works again as things are not too pleasant at Bloemfontein just now. He suggests that if it comes off, perhaps we might consider moving back to Cape Town as well. If Aunt Eliza was also in Cape Town, it might be worthwhile considering but candidly I feel much more drawn to East London if ever we do make a move but I do not entertain anything of the sort whilst Aunt Eliza is here. We shall be seeing Joe and family on Saturday night when they pass through to Bloemfontein. They have enjoyed their holiday which has been all too short.

What do you weigh? I weighed myself recently and turn the scale at 162½ in winter clothing. We are still enjoying our grapes. Our figs are finished.

We are glad Dot can report that Norman was getting better. Grace reports good rains and tanks full. Servant boy had left owing to illness. Ted doing the milking and the boys helping in various ways. Cecily will be nine on Tuesday next. As I have important meetings on Thursday, I am posting on Wednesday. It is sad about the three Kingswood boys who are lost in an aeroplane on their way to Grahamstown. We had eight planes here on Saturday under the command of a lady officer. She knew her job well. Lots of love to all, Dad.



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday morning March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I posted yesterday afternoon but did not make any reference to our holiday arrangements. Last evening I phoned to Mrs Forbes at Burghersdorp (Mom's cousin) – and she said it would be more convenient for us to visit her on our way to Aliwal North. I then phoned to Harry Collett, Collett Siding and they said it would be convenient for us to call there on Monday next on our way to Burghersdorp so we have decided to leave here on Monday April 1<sup>st</sup> 7.25 a.m. arriving Collett Siding 9.55 a.m. and spend a couple of days there and then on to Uncle Owen's at Rooispruit on Wednesday morning and have a couple of days with them and then on to Burghersdorp on Saturday morning.

The Mayoral Congress begins in Aliwal North on Tuesday evening 9<sup>th</sup>. We have asked Dora to be our guest at Aliwal – the two towns are close together. I do not know how long Congress will last but probably to Thursday. As we are not going north owing to altitude, we will go down to East London for a few days and see Mrs Hudson, Shinglers etc. and be back home somewhere about 20<sup>th</sup>. Will probably stay at the same hotel as Mrs Hudson (Orient Hotel, Currie Street). I do not know if I will take my typewriter with us but in any case will have a supply of postcards handy.

Of course I shall leave instructions at the Post Office for correspondence to be redirected but you can address the next letters to care of Mrs Forbes, Craigeveer, Burghersdorp and the following week's letter to Royal Hotel, Aliwal North. We will probably stay at the Orient Hotel, East London the following week.

I am sorry I was not able to post this in time for the fast mail this evening. I have had a full day at the office with a deputation of farmers and Government official and have just returned from the annual meeting of the hospital subscribers and it is now ten p.m.

I phoned last to Harry Collett's as stated above and have omitted to say that they gave me the sad news that the son who was married to Rev Wellington's daughter on January 6<sup>th</sup> last (she was a doctor) had died the day before from an attack of nerves. Her husband is away at defence force camp. The newspaper states that she fell out of a window. She was in a nursing home in Port Elizabeth. It is terribly sad.

We are also grieved to hear of the loss of three young men who were on their way to Grahamstown to attend the reunion of Kingswood scholars. It now transpires that the aeroplane in which they were travelling crashed about 15 miles from where they started from. I know the parents of two of them. Dot stayed with the Amms when she went to Johannesburg Exhibition.

I have not thought of packing and have lots to see to before we can leave on Monday morning.

Suppose Joe and family are in the train tonight.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
Sunday March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I feel that I must just send a few lines before leaving on holiday. March 31<sup>st</sup> is an important day for all of us in some way or other and a red-letter day, specially for some of the family.

To Reg and Dot, it is the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their wedding and to David, it is his fourteenth birthday. To Joe and Blodwen, it is their eighth anniversary. To all of us, it is the end of the month and the end of the first quarter of the year. It is also the end of the financial year for Provincial and Union Governments. To one and all, I wish much happiness and everything that is good for each and all concerned. We went over to the station about eleven last night and saw Joe and Blodwen for a few minutes. Am sorry we forgot to give them greetings but there was very little time for anything but talk about their proposed transfer back to Cape Town. Joe does not think it will come off but if it does, he thinks they would live at Pinelands as there is a good service of electric trains there and he could get home to mid-day meals. Pinelands is certainly a very nice part of Cape Town.

It rained almost all day yesterday but fortunately cleared up in the evening, otherwise Mom would not have gone to the station. The train pulled up on the island platform and was a very long train and we had to walk along the track before we reached their carriage. There was lots of mud and water to negotiate and the lighting was far from good. We must agitate for a new and larger station.

The average rainfall spread over a period of about sixty years (of which I have a complete record) is about 13 inches per annum. So far we have had 3.71 in January, February 3.89 and so far this month we have had 5.07, making a total of 12.67 inches.

You will be sorry to hear that Muriel Wells has mumps at Maritzburg. They are just out of quarantine for measles or something of the sort. Hard lines.

Aunt Emmie has recently celebrated her 58<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Aunt Emmie has spent a week at Clifton with the Coldreys and enjoyed the rest.

Aunt Eliza is keeping much the same as usual. She still gets out in her chair. I am sorry to be away from her but it cannot be helped. I cannot definitely say when we will be back. Perhaps we will stay more than a week at East London. Joe says Una and Jim Florence are at Fish Hoek with the old folk so I suppose we shall not see them.

I may not take my typewriter but as I have sent three letters within the last week, and no doubt shall send a postcard or two whilst away, I don't think you will miss much.

? p.m. we are just going up to the hospital to say goodbye to Mr Dersley and to Aunt Eliza's house to see her so will close with lots of love to each and all for the time-being.

Yours affectionately

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
as Thursday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

We returned yesterday (Tuesday) after three weeks absence from home. During that time I have used about 50 or more postcards to keep you more or less informed of our doings. I do not know how far I shall be able to give you a more detailed account of our holiday but will attempt it and if I cannot complete it this week, will try to do so before next Thursday comes round. First of all let me thank all who have kept us in touch during the period. We have enjoyed the change and have met quite a number of old friends and have made a few new ones.

Starting from Monday April 1<sup>st</sup>, we spent two days at cousin Harry Collett's at Collett Siding, Ethne's home. I had previously phoned to enquire if it would be convenient for us to call and were surprised to learn that their son John, who married Miss (Dr) Wellington in January last had died a few days previously from a nervous breakdown. It was described as an accident but other construction has been put upon it. Her husband was away at Defence Force training at the time and she was in a nursing home in Port Elizabeth. They wished us to come and were pleased to have our sympathy in their sad bereavement. You may remember when we were in Cape Town some years ago, Harry Collett and his daughter, Mary, came down for a serious operation. He has completely recovered and is as busy as any farmer. The son has the old home and Harry and his wife only have a small portion of the farm to look after. Mary is keeping house for her bereaved brother. He has such a nice home beautifully furnished and in delightful surroundings. Everyone is very sorry for hm. Ethne is still at Healdtown native institution. Her younger sister is recently engaged o a trader named Hartly.

We spent part of Wednesday in Middelburg and visited Myra Collett and her sister, Mrs Richmond of Moorreesburg. Joe will remember going there with Mom years ago. Uncle Owen and Beryl were in town, playing bowls, and we returned with them to Rooispruit for the night. Aunt Kate was at Johannesburg with their youngest daughter, Thera, who was very ill at the time. We also saw Leslie and family and I called in at their school and said a few words to the ten scholars. I should say that whilst in Middelburg, the Mayor, Mr Minnaar, took me all over the town and location which I was anxious to see as we are trying to improve local conditions here.

From Rooispruit we were the only passengers in the train to Burghersdorp. It was what is called a "mixed" train-passenger-and goods. Such trains do not run to schedule and arrived fully half an hour before it usually does. Consequently no one was at the station to meet us. However after phoning to Cousin Mrs Forbes, she soon appeared upon the scene. She spends most of her time staying with one or other of her three children – all married – who live in the district. Haldane lives about three miles from town and is farming with Romney sheep etc. His wife is sister to Rex Kelly's first wife in Mafeking, a Miss Chalmers. Their two children are very nice, quite young. Mrs Forbes is Harry Collett's eldest sister and of course Mom's first cousin. In their young days they used to sing duets etc. and we had the pleasure of listening to some of their old songs again. We spent part of an afternoon visiting the other son's farm, about three miles away. Dora drives a baby Morris car and crossing a small river between the two farms, the car stuck between stones and after several fruitless efforts to negotiate, we had to get out and walk the rest of the way – only about 100 yards to the house. They have a very nice modern house which reminded us a good deal of Douglas' home. At both homes the view is very fine looking across the valley to distant hills. They had had five inches of rain recently so the veldt was in excellent condition. This son is evidently a good bit of an engineer by the quantity of tools and machinery he has about the place. He was able to get the car out of the river after a great deal of difficulty. Probably they will have the drift cemented so as to avoid further trouble. Fortunately there was not much water in the river at the time.

We spent the weekend with her daughter, Mrs Pocock, who farms about six miles away in the opposite direction. Mr Pocock had the misfortune to shoot off his left hand some years ago and consequently is not able to do much in the farming line. In fact he is in partnership in a

general business in Burghersdorp and goes in daily and is only home in the evening. Their eldest daughter is training as a nurse in East London and during our stay there, had her out to morning tea. There is one daughter at home in school – used to be at Rocklands. The two youngest boys at home are also at the local school. Mr Lomax is a local preacher and sometimes visits Cradock. Whilst at Burghersdorp, Ernest phones me about Aunt Eliza's accident and I, at once, suggested returning to Cradock but was assured that as she was in hospital, nothing further could be done at present. I have since heard the following particulars as to how the accident happened. On Wednesday morning Auntie was walking from her pantry with some grapes on a plate to wash when she tripped over a piece of matting or oilcloth and fell heavily on her right arm. Fortunately Maggie was in the kitchen and heard her fall and calling for help. She managed to get up and sit upon a chair. When Mr Thomas came home for dinner about one, he got Miss Loscombe, who is a nurse, to come and see what was the matter. She was very brave but unfortunately she had to make two trips in her wheeled chair to the hospital for X-ray and examination. However she stood all that very well and after spending two weeks there in the general ward, she came home on Friday last. Mr Thomas has been very good in waiting upon her, going to the hospital daily and making all sorts of plans for her comfort. He has made a number of alterations in the house so that her wheeled chair can be brought into the sitting room and down to the garden. He has also bought a second-hand electric stove so as to avoid using the primus which, in the hands of Maggie, might be very dangerous. He kept Aunt Emmie informed by wire. She would like to have come herself but owing to the state of her heart, it was quite out of the question. Gladys arrived on Thursday night and of course has taken charge. Unfortunately she cannot stay longer than Saturday and the difficulty is to find anyone who can sleep in and attend to Aunt. Both Alison and ourselves have offered to have her at our homes but she will not accept. Of course, we all think it would be best for her to return with Gladys for a while as there are so many there who could, and who wish to, help her but she will not hear of it. We are trying to get a native or coloured person who could sleep in, so far without success. I am glad to say she is very bright and is able to write with her left hand quite legibly. The arm is in plaster of Paris and will not be taken out for a few weeks yet. Alison brought her down here Tuesday afternoon in her wheeled chair without any ill effects. She can move her fingers without any pain. We are all so thankful that the accident happened whilst someone was in the house so as to render help. I have always been afraid that something of the sort might happen when she was alone and the front door locked which would have been very dreadful. However we are thankful that it is no worse. We hope everything will go smoothly and that there will be a perfect recovery. Joyce may be able to come later on if Dudley has to go into camp but nothing is decided yet. Aunt Eliza wished us to continue our holiday so we did.

We left Burghersdorp on Monday afternoon and again had the whole train to ourselves. Mom and Mrs Forbes stayed with Miss Lily Trollip, daughter of Uncle Dan Trollip. I stayed at the hotel so as to be near the meeting place. We spent three nights there. The first evening we spent together talking of old times which was very interesting. The next evening the ladies, who had accompanied their husbands to the congress, were entertained to a bio run by Mrs Munroe (formerly Miss Venter of Vryburg) whilst the men were at an official dinner given to the delegates by the Mayor. The last evening all were invited to a dance at the natural hot springs about three miles from town. Mom and I were taken there and back by a Doctor Butler, a radiologist, who has a practice there. He was formerly in Somerset East and at one time worked in the C.H.M. here. He is no relation. We stayed to the supper and saw what we have not seen before – not that we often attend such functions -. Small tables were arranged round the room and after savouries were served, plates of meats – ham, tongue, chicken etc. were brought to each table but no plates or knives or forks were supplied. Only paper serviettes. Everyone therefore had to use their fingers. Perhaps this is the modern way of doing things. The function was held at the hot springs and was well illuminated, quite fairylike. By the way, Mom and cousins had three bathes in the springs and enjoyed them. I did not venture. I noticed the altitude affected my head somewhat but no ill effects resulted. I will not trouble you with details

of the actual congress. My delegates and I inspected the location which is a great improvement on ours.

Aliwal is a very pretty place, the European population is only 2800. The gardens are very nice and as they have an unlimited supply of water from the Orange River, they can afford to use plenty of it. It is quite a progressive place and is well administered from a municipal point of view. We met Mr Galvin and Hayes from Vryburg there and of course many others from different parts of the Cape Province. Next year's congress is to be held at Cape Town. We had a look through the old cemetery to see if we could find the grave of Uncle Jack's father but could not trace it. We found Uncle Dan's. The Municipal buildings are nicely situated in the middle of a large garden.

We left Aliwal on Friday morning, again we had the whole train, a mixed one, to ourselves as far as Burghersdorp. Cousin Dora had left the day before but met us at the station and spent the hour or so we had to wait there with us. At one station near there is a hill which bears a peculiar name meaning a droning noise which is said to be always heard emanating from this hill. I wonder if it has any connection with the hot sulphur springs in the neighbourhood.

We did not have to change and reached East London about six on Saturday morning. We had not booked accommodation but were fortunate in getting a room on the ground floor with a door opening onto the stoep. Mr and Mrs Hudson were there and Trixie and her husband arrived after dinner, having been on a visit to some of his relations in or near Grahamstown. He had to leave the same afternoon for Johannesburg. All the Hudson family seem very well. Mrs Hudson had got very tired of being away from her home for nine months and decided to return with Mr Hudson on the following Friday, Trixie and baby going on the same train. I do not know when I have seen a more contented baby. He sleeps when put down without any trouble and is as good as can be when awake. He certainly does his mother great credit. Mrs Watts Trollip and her daughter Alice, formerly of Hartlip, Vryburg, are also staying at the same hotel. She has to live at the coast on account of her heart. Of course we knew them when we were at Vryburg and often went to their farm for weekends etc. Mrs Trollip even remembered an address I read at a service I held there in those bygone days. Her daughter is a trained nurse and looks after her mother splendidly. We enjoyed many chats. Her daughter has a German dachshund which she is passionately fond of. She spends much time in attending to its toilet, brushing, washing, outing etc. Una and her husband and little boy spent a Saturday afternoon with us and we had supper with them one evening. They had recently returned from their holiday at Cape Town where they saw Joe and Blodwen. They are still living in the same house but want to sell it and live nearer to town. We also saw the Sowdens one evening and Mr Schroder very kindly took us for a spin round some of the beauty spots. We saw the old wreck which interested us so much last year. There are two pieces still outstanding in the water. It is considerably more broken up than a year ago.

I also phoned up Mr Lutge. His son answered and said he was now in charge of the cottages, his father having bought another place at Orange Grove. I enquired after the Ibbs family. Strange to say Mrs Ibbs had just been to see him and he gave me her phone number. They came to see us on Friday morning and I am sorry to say that they find themselves in a bad way.

I got as far as the above on Wednesday after opening the Horticultural Show at 4 pm and up to the time of going to bed about 9.30. I was interrupted a couple of times by visits from Mr and Mrs Weavers. It is now 6.30 am Thursday and I want to get this off today.

"Resuming the news" from Cradock, as the Overseas announcer says, the Ibbs say they did not inspect the farm property. They hired it for three years and up to now they have suffered a severe drought. The war has adversely affected prices and they find they cannot carry on. I am very sorry for them, they are such nice people. Mr Ibbs' sister was with them.

There was a big bowling tournament on at the time of our visit. Ladies from all parts of the Union were there but we did not see any from Grahamstown. Mr Rouse (formerly of Vryburg) told us that Rosy Norquay – now Mrs Williams – was amongst the number. She called

to see us and it was interesting to hear of the members of her family. Tom, who helped me years ago to fix up the lights in the Congregational Church and his brother are both married, also her sister. Tom has been unfortunate, having met with two serious accidents on the mines which nearly cost him his life. I reminded her of the wonderful diamond they found when digging at Taungs and which they thought was not a diamond at all. It proved to be and it fetch £3000. Louis still holds the claim and occasionally goes back to try his luck again.

We have often been asked by my old YMCA typist, now Mrs Annandale, who lives in the Barkly East district, about 100 miles from Aliwal North but as the altitude was much higher than Aliwal, I sent them a note saying if they were in Aliwal, we would be pleased to see them. I received a phone message saying they would be passing through on the afternoon of the last day of the congress so Mom and I went to the station and had a nice chat with her and her husband and her Mother. They were very pleased to see us and thought we were looking wonderfully well. She has quite recovered from her disappointments in losing two babies. Another old Cradock boy I met in Aliwal was Bertie Field who was a chemist assistant here in Austin's time. He now works for Lennons Ltd and will be shortly retiring.

No doubt there will be other incidents that may occur but I think I have given enough about the holiday for this sitting. Let me say in conclusion that we had delightful weather all the time. It only rained one night. We wore light clothing most of the time and so far as I can see, the climate agreed with both of us very well. I noticed a considerable difference for the better in breathing and the constant drumming in my ears ceased. We enjoyed sitting overlooking the sea for many hours. We attended services at the Methodist Church and heard Revs. Mearer and Allen. We also attended to the opening of a new organ in the church. I attended a sitting of the Town Council for an hour or two and had interviews with the Mayors and the Town Clerks and other officials. I find I can always learn something from them. One official took us for a drive through the park. Most of the monkeys are now shut up in cages and the number greatly reduced. It was found that having them loose about the park, they did too much damage to motor cars etc.

I had a Council meeting the evening I arrived home and have been kept busy ever since. I have not been able to reply to the numerous letters received but will do so as soon as possible. I am sorry to hear that Ruth has had to give up all her outside committee work as the strain is too much for her. She is keeping on with the secretaryship of the Settlers Club. I am sorry we were not at home when Rex passed through on his way home for the holidays.

In a letter from Lynne, she mentions the possibility of her getting a situation in Cradock when she has passed her commercial examination. We shall be delighted if such should happen.

We found everything in the house alright when we returned. The maid was here but she comes very late in the mornings now that it is getting darker. Our Virginian creeper has lost nearly all its leaves. The autumn tints are very pretty.

Alison brought Aunt Eliza down in her chair on Tuesday afternoon to see us. She stood the ride quite well.

I must really stop now. Have just finished breakfast.

Much love to each and all.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, P.O. Box 141  
as Thursday May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

May 2<sup>nd</sup> being Ascension Day and a public holiday, I am posting a day earlier so that you may get the letters before Sunday as I know most of you like to write on Sundays so that we can received them on Wednesday. I shall not inflict such a long epistle on you this week as last. I hope you did not get tired of reading it. It gave me a great deal of pleasure in writing it.

I might have stated that we slept in no less than eight different beds during our visit. Needless to say we missed our comfortable spring mattresses. The veldt all over the country was in very good condition and there should be plenty of feed for stock for the winter. My thermometer did not register any frost during the three weeks but almost all the leaves have dropped off the Virginia creeper over our tanks. The vines are still shedding their leaves which makes the garden look very untidy. We have had two days of very unpleasant weather, cold north west wind with a little sleet. Most uninviting to be out of doors. Hope it won't be like this for the Fish River Fete on Thursday.

Grace writes that David celebrated his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday by being put into long trousers. After searching all over Kroonstad, they were only able to find one pair that would fit him as he is now six feet tall and very thin. What is he going to grow to by the time he is 25? He weighs 114 pounds.

The alterations to Dot's house are now completed much to her and Reg's delight I am sure. I am anxious to see it and one of these days I expect I shall ignore doctor's orders and take a trip round. There is so much I want to see. By the way it is Dot's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Sunday. Hope she has a happy day. I am sorry to hear that Norman is subject to malaria attacks but hope he will grow out of it.

Thanks for suggestions re old Xmas cards. I hear Mrs Rickett collects them. I must write to her. By the way, did I tell you we ran across her one day at the beach. She was as jolly as usual. We also saw Nelly one evening when she came to say goodbye to Trixie. Incidentally her husband phoned for her to come home at once as baby was needing her. What poor creatures we mere men are in such circumstances. I remember sending for Mom one evening when she had gone to church and left me in charge and one of you set up howling.

Ernest's Christine, who has been on the telephone exchange for some time, has decided to take up nursing at the end of the year. The family has been in the wars lately it appears. Joan injured her knee at hockey recently and had to be carried off the field. She is still able to carry on her teaching at Rocklands. Guy was involved in a motor accident in Johannesburg and had to have some stitches, but was not detained. Jeffrey has mumps at Kingswood. Ernest is going over to Graaff Reinet on Thursday. We do not know when Mary will be returning but we are having a Friends gathering on May 31<sup>st</sup> for the weekend and I expect she will try to be here for that.

We hear that Eric Fear is at Cape Town for a few days. Wonder if he will come back this way as he is travelling by car with Metcalf. Gladys only spent a week here with Aunt Eliza. She had visitors coming from East London so had to return. Aunt Eliza is getting on very nicely. One or other, and sometimes both of us, see her daily. We took her to the park on Sunday afternoon and she quite enjoyed the outing. She cannot walk yet but is moved from room to room in her chair. Mr Thomas had the floors altered so as to allow for this whilst she was in hospital. She is spending a good deal of her time in looking over old letters of her school days. They are very interesting. She has given me a bunch of my Father's letters to her. I should like you to see how small he wrote – of course on both sides of the paper – and lines close together. Her servant girl sleeps in and nurse Loscombe comes every other day to wash her etc. If Dudley should be called up, Joyce would probably come for a while. She is very bright and cheerful.

On Saturday afternoon Mom, Enid and I went to see the film of Stanley finding Livingstone. It was quite interesting and well produced. It was too short for my liking. Last Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> was the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of my leaving London. Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, (P.O. Box 141)  
as Thursday May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I have had an unexpected trip since I last wrote. It happened on this wise. As I think I have told you before, we are having a lot of trouble with the contractors for constructing the new storage reservoirs. They are making all sorts of excuses for not completing the work and dispute the terms of the contract. In order to satisfy the Councillors, it was decided at a special meeting of the Council on Monday morning that we should take further legal advice from our barrister who resides in Grahamstown. After making telephonic enquiries, we found that he was in Umtata attending Circuit Court there and would not be back for some time so it was necessary for the Town Clerk, another Councillor and myself to buzz off at three quarters of an hour's notice to see him at Umtata. This is nearly 250 miles from here and the train journey would have taken us a long time and the matter being urgent, we went by car – the Town Clerk's. Umtata, in case you do not know, is in the Transkei, not far from Port St Johns. We left at ten past four in the afternoon via Tarkastad, Queenstown and Engcobo arriving at Umtata at 25 minutes to twelve. All the way from Queenstown was quite new to me but of course it was quite dark but we saw it in the return trip. Rain had fallen recently but we took the precaution to ascertain the state of the road. One river we passed had recently overflowed its bank and left debris in the railings of the bridge. Umtata is the chief town in the Transkei and seat of the native Bunga or council. This happened to be in session so we looked in for a few minutes and it was interesting to watch how keen they are in looking after the interests of their territory. The Bunga is presided over by the Chief Native Commissioner (European) and all the European commissioners attend. All, Europeans and natives – are seated at desks and comfortable seats just the same as in parliament. We saw numbers of "raw" kaffirs on the road and admired their round huts thatched with reeds. There are few fences in the territory and it is wonderful how livestock is kept out of the cultivated parts. It is entirely a grass country with wooded hills and a number of rivers. Umtata is fortunate in having a bountiful supply of water with which they are able to generate their electricity. On Tuesday we had a long consultation with the Advocate which clarified our position and we left before lunch in rain for home. We arrived at 7.35 after having covered 476 miles out and home. We were very tired but glad we went. One of Alison's daughters slept with Mom the one night I was away. We have had another special Council meeting this (Wednesday) morning to report on our work and it is quite possible I may have to go to Johannesburg on the matter yet and there may be lawsuits also. Enough on this matter.

When you have listened to the chimes of Big Ben, have you ever realised that the chimes are a prayer? Rev Weavers, in his sermon on Sunday, sang it to these words:

"All through this hour                      And by Thy power  
Lord be my guide                      No foot shall slide."

After going over a few times, the whole congregation joined in with him. I think it is so appropriate. I do not know where he got the information from but it is a very nice thought.

We hope Dot had a happy birthday last Sunday. We thought of her. It was our Sunday School anniversary day but owing to heavy rain all day on Saturday, when we had 1½ inches, it was decided to postpone the anniversary to ... Grace's Jean sang a solo at their Sunday School anniversary.

Joe has enlisted in the motor transport section. We have not heard if he had passed the medical examination. Their baby is walking at ten months. Blodwen's contributions to the Outspan are under her non de plume of Gloria Bennett, so look out for them. We had our first fire on May 1<sup>st</sup>, Joe and Blodwen had theirs the same evening. On Sunday afternoon we had a visit from Mr and Mrs Midgley from the Protectorate. They have joined Friends and are on four months holiday. They slept here that night and have gone on to Port Elizabeth. We are glad to hear that Douglas will be coming down about June 20<sup>th</sup> to Port Elizabeth and breaks here on his return.

Lots of love to all, Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock. P.O. Box 141  
Thursday May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I have no trips into the country to report this week and there is very little to write about. However I shall try to keep up the weekly epistle of at least one sheet.

On Monday evening we went to see Rex pass on his way back to Kingswood. He seemed quite well but we were sorry to hear that Douglas was not at all and could not keep anything down. We hope when he comes down to attend the United Party Congress at Port Elizabeth about 29<sup>th</sup> that he will get expert advice and if necessary be X-rayed. We are naturally looking forward to his visit on his way home again. We hope he will go via Grahamstown.

Ruth gave us a surprise visit on Sunday at dinner time. She had the offer of a free trip up and so came to dinner. We were glad to see her looking so well and hearty. She left again about two as she had some engagement to keep that evening. We were sorry to hear of the accidental death of Milner's father-in-law. It appears he had been trucking some mules at a station when one of the animals in the truck kicked the door open which knocked him over fracturing his skull. We are very sorry for May and Milner.

Joe writes that the Railway department is not allowing any more of their staff to sign on for service without special permission as they cannot be spared. Some new men have been transferred to his workshops so he thinks he may get his transfer before long. We must wait and see.

Grace is still having servant trouble. Perhaps being so near to town, it is awkward to keep them under control but it must be very annoying when so much has to be done. Their storage tank is finished and measures 24 feet by six high. It is only waiting to be filled. No word of any transfer for them yet.

Alan has a birthday on Sunday and is sharing a party with a chum on a farm nearby whose birthday is on the same day but a year older. Reg has been overhauled and has to give up smoking and go on diet as he has been troubled with indigestion for some time.

Last evening the United Party elected me as one of their delegates to attend their Congress at Port Elizabeth on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> but as we are having a number of Friends from Port Elizabeth for a business meeting here over that week, it will not be convenient to get away. This is the Congress Douglas is going to. We are looking forward to his breaking the journey here on his return.

Aunt Jessie will be 80 on 29<sup>th</sup> instant. We must try to run out and see her on that day if possible. She will be the third living in the family over 80. Mom is the next on the list. Uncle Walter and Olive have not yet moved into town but we understand they will be here soon. Mary is looking to come over from Graaff Reinet for the meetings at the end of the month.

Aunt Eliza is getting on nicely. She had the plaster of Paris removed this week but is not using the arm yet. She is able to write with it a little but is very careful. She cannot walk yet but we hope strength will come to her legs soon. There is talk of Joyce coming up if Dudley has to go into training.

Eric Fear has returned home. He was quite ill whilst in Cape Town.

Mom has a touch of rheumatism the last few days but the weather has been damp and chilly. We have not had many fires yet and hardly any frost.

The war has reached a very serious stage. I still listen in at six a.m. and owing to pressure of work, I am not taking any newspaper except the Midland so am dependent on Daventry and local service. The surrender of Holland is a serious blow but the end is not yet.

Thanks for all letters received during the week. We heard from each home and good news from all. On 27<sup>th</sup> it will be exactly 53 years since I arrived in Cradock. What a lot has happened in that time. I have much to be thankful for the numerous blessings received. I have my many ups and downs but can still say "hitherto the Lord has blessed me".

Much love to each and all from

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Craddock. P.O. Box 141  
as Thursday May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

War news and local news is not too good this week. It is Wednesday morning and the wireless tells me that the French Premier has admitted that the position in France is very serious. The common enemy is advancing; that serious errors of judgement have been made by their commanders in not adequately defending or protecting various points. He concludes by saying that France cannot be beaten. Personally I have not lost faith in the righteousness of the Allied cause and that the powers of evil will be defeated.

Local news is that a very serious fire broke out on Thursday evening last. I had gone to evening service as usual at 7.30 and was surprised to find only Rev Weavers and one other present. She remarked that she expected everyone was at the fire. We had not heard the fire bell ring about 6.30. No service was held and we went to see the fire. The whole block of buildings, including Mr Thomas' book shop was in flames. A Florist occupied the corner shop, then Mr Thomas and next to him a Bazaar. On the other side, opposite the big C.H.M was a barbers. Only a wooden partition existed between the florist and Thomas. The roof soon caught alight and spread to the whole block. In less than an hour the contents of each shop was gone. Of course it continued burning for some hours but there was no time to save any of the stock. Shops had just closed for the day except the barbers. He saved most of his stock. The fire started in the florists, where she had dresses as well as flowers. The cause of the fire has not been discovered. Fortunately Mr Thomas was insured but he does not know if to sufficient extent to cover the increased price of goods at replacement cost. Fortunately his safe was not destroyed. What he is going to do I do not know. Must wait and see what compensation he gets. Unfortunately the Municipal fire engine broke down in the early stages of the fire and a new hose, which the Council had purchased only September last, had been damaged by rats and consequently was not very efficient. Everyone is very sorry for Mr Thomas.

Tuesday afternoon we had news that old Mrs Biggs, whom Mary has been attending for several months, passed away that morning. She has been ailing for years. The funeral is this afternoon (Wednesday). No one is going from here. Then we are having trouble with the Sunday School. The anniversary was postponed by the Superintendent owing to rain on the appointed day – or rather the day before – until next Sunday. Now the King has requested the Empire to observe that day as a day of humiliation and prayer. The Superintendent objected to a further postponement and refused to accept a compromise and has now cancelled the anniversary altogether. This has caused a lot of feeling in the church and I expect he – the Superintendent – will either be asked to resign or will do so voluntarily.

Aunt Eliza is getting on nicely now and is able to use her right hand a little. She cannot raise her arm to do her hair but writes with it. She is also able to walk about her room a little. She has been reading and destroying a lot of old letters. Some my parents wrote while she was at school. I have asked for a few as specimens for you to see how neat his writing was in those far off days. No writing only on one side of the paper as you do now. I am surprised that you still do so as paper is scarce. In England they are rationed with paper and I think we all should be more economical in this respect. We are looking forward to Douglas' visit about the end of next week. I do not think I will go to the United Party Congress at Port Elizabeth as we are expecting Friends here for the weekend. Thursday afternoon, 23<sup>rd</sup>. I managed to catch a nasty cold the last day or so and so had breakfast in bed this a.m. and am feeling better this afternoon.

Mrs McLeod is spending a week with us and is helping in various ways. The Sunday School picnic is on tomorrow, suppose we shall go out some part of the day.

We are going next Wednesday afternoon to Fish River to wish Aunt Jessie many happy returns of the day. Thanks for all letters received the last few days, sorry I cannot reply to them by this post. Mary returns to Craddock on Monday from Graaff Reinet. We all will be pleased to see her again. Uncle Walter and Olive have come to stay in town. We have not seen their house yet but will do so this week. Uncle Walter slept here one night. Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
as Thursday May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I am glad not to have to report any serious tragedies so far as our circle is concerned. The greatest tragedy so far as the war is affected is the dreadful surrender without the approval of his people by the King of Belgium.

On Monday evening, Mom and I went over to see Douglas on his way to Port Elizabeth. The train for a wonder was up to time. Mr Badenhorst was with him also Frank White of Polokwani. Douglas likes to return about Friday. It is unfortunate that his visit clashes with the Friends from Port Elizabeth but we shall manage alright after Sunday when they return home. He will also visit the Websters whilst here. He is not going to Grahamstown this time.

The Sunday School picnic was held on Empire Day and was a happy time for the youngsters. On Saturday we had two boys from Grey University staying with us for the day. They were playing our local Boys school football and gave them a sound beating. We also watched the Rhodes match last Wednesday which was a well contested game. Cradock team won. Denis was not playing.

I published an appeal to the public to attend the services in their respective churches on Sunday in response to the King's desire. Am glad to say there was a very hearty response so far as the English section of the public was concerned. I understand no reference was made to the matter in the Dutch Church. We listened in to Mr Hofmeyer's address from the Wanderers Hall on Sunday afternoon. How thankful the country should be that such a man is in the Cabinet and no doubt will some day be our Prime Minister. General Smuts was also in good form at the banquet given him on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Recently we have made two improvements in the house. The three wooden fireplaces never pleased us as they were untidy so have substituted imitation clompie brick fireplaces. They are made in cement and then painted as bricks and look very nice. The improvement is in placing four small electric lights in the ceiling of the drawing room which adds greatly to the comfort of the room.

On Sunday afternoon I had arranged to visit an old coloured woman in the location who was celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday that day. I notified the minister of her church and he, without consulting me, arranged a service in his church. The poor old soul was too ill to attend but her eldest daughter was there and took a small present for her. We had quite a good service though quite impromptu.

Mary returned to Cradock this week and is helping Aunt Eliza. She has no plans for the immediate future. Last season we planted a grapefruit tree. It has borne three large fruit one of which weighs just two pounds. Mrs McLeod is trying her hand at making some marmalade with one fruit. I should also state that we have put an inclined plain at the steps for the back veranda so that Aunt Eliza's wheeled chair can be easily brought into the house.

Thursday morning. Rev Weavers motored us out to Fish River about 3 pm yesterday and there were about 30 relatives there already. Only two of the family – Aunt Letty and Uncle Owen – were not present. Aunt Jessie was taken quite by surprise but quite enjoyed the function. The family subscribed and presented her with a nice warm dressing gown. I referred to the wonderful hospitality everyone had received at her hands etc. Rev Weavers conducted family prayers. Uncle Norman's youngest boy responded for Aunt Jessie. The function concluded with God save the King and God be with you till we meet again. We were back in town by 5.30.

We are expecting our Friend visitors about 4 tomorrow afternoon. It is awkward their visit clashing with Douglas' but shall make the best of it. Mrs McLeod is staying with us to help with the providing etc. Mom has not been too well the last few days, complaining of ear trouble. 7.35 our maid has just arrived. She is always late in the mornings. Sorry to hear that little Norman had such a fright whilst biking out to Mrs Amms. He saw a baboon crossing the road in front of him and he says the animal looked at him and followed him so he turned tail and raced home. Lots of love, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
as Thursday June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Douglas is with us and we are pleased to have his company. He arrived on Friday afternoon just about the same time as our visitors. He came by car with Larry Oats who had also been down to Port Elizabeth and gave him a lift back. The United Party Congress he went to attend was evidently a great success. General Smuts was not able to be present as war developments – the capitulation of the Belgian King – necessitated his remaining in Pretoria. Owing to Douglas' visit clashing with our other visitors, we arranged for him to stay with the Websters for Friday and Saturday night but he saw a good deal of the Friends all the same. One, an Irishman, was full of tricks and fun. Aunt Eliza came down during the afternoon and saw something of them. Douglas also went to see her in her home. We entertained Mr and Mrs Blunsom, Mr Bateman and Mr McDougal. Ina slept in my bed and I had the bed on the back stoep. In the evening, we all met in our lounge, including Mrs Garnett, Mr and Mrs Addis Smith, Mary, Honor Biggs and Mr Thomas. Tea was served round about nine thirty. Saturday morning most of the visitors met at Mary's and had morning tea there and also visited Aunt Eliza. Some had business to see to. In the afternoon we took a car load to the warm baths and back via the Krantz road and then along the mountain drive and the Egg Rock. They seemed impressed with the size and tidiness of the town. The late afternoon and evening was spent in meeting. Sunday morning we also met here for worship and after an early cold dinner, our guests were off on their return trip home. We enjoyed their company and they voted the meetings a success. The next gathering will probably be held in Port Elizabeth on August bank holiday. A few snapshots were taken in our garden. Friends also visited Aunt Eliza and saw some of her treasures. Ina was a help in the provision line. Douglas came to us after dinner on Sunday and later in the afternoon, the Websters took us for a spin along the Tarkastad road from where we could see Lake Arthur. The weather has been delightfully fine, cold nights and bright days. My bird bath has been frozen only once this winter so far.

Uncle Walter spent one afternoon and night with us as Olive went to comfort a great friend of hers whose husband died suddenly on Sunday night. It appears he was in town a few days ago with the object of enlisting in the army but the doctor advised him to come again in about a fortnight's time. It appears that his heart was weak. It is a great shock to all concerned. Uncle Walter cannot see to read and cannot walk any distance. He just sits in the sun all day long. He is very deaf and consequently difficult to talk to. He enjoyed Douglas' company and had many laughs. He is very independent, will not have an overcoat on or a rug over his knees. He manages for himself quite well considering. He cannot take or put on his coat and waistcoat without help but otherwise he is independent.

The latest news from Joe and Blodwen is that Joe is asking to cancel his application for transfer as the position seems more congenial than it was. It is rumoured that the workshops are to be turned into munitions works.

Thursday afternoon, 6<sup>th</sup>. I had an important meeting on last evening at the vestry and left it in order to see Douglas off at the station but was only in time to see the train puffing out of the station. However Mom and the Websters were there. Mary came along before we got back from a drive, the Websters took us to Mr Cull's farm. Douglas tells me they are generally in Vryburg on Fridays so if I post on Wednesday afternoons, he should get letters that day instead of about Tuesdays as at present. So in future I shall try to post on Wednesdays. Douglas, at my request, was overhauled by Dr Scholtz on Wednesday and I hope the treatment he has prescribed will do him good. He advised him to have an operation on his nose which he thinks will ease his trouble. I feel sure he would enjoy better health if he gave up smoking. I am glad to say we are both keeping well and the cold weather has not been too severe. Only twice has the bird bath been frozen this season. Thanks for all letters received. Glad Lynne and Kingsley have had a nice weekend at Dorothy's. Grace has sent some snaps of baby which are being sent round and have to be returned to her. Lots of love to all. Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141. Cradock  
as Wednesday June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

It is Tuesday morning early and I have just listened in to the news regarding the entry of Italy into the war. Last night I set my electric alarm clock for 1 a.m. but it went off at 11.30 by mistake. However I did not go back to bed but listened to a special talk by A.N. Wilson on the new situation which was most illuminating. President Roosevelt's speech came over very clearly. He did not declare war on Italy as I expected he would but it is probable he has to consult his Government before doing so. There is no doubt as to his position and it seems impossible for America to keep out of the war. It is all very terrible and there is no knowing whereunto it may spread. However we must keep calm and not lose our faith and trust in the Almighty power of God.

It was nearly two o'clock when I went back to bed. Roosevelt's speech has been relayed again from Johannesburg this morning and the news from Daventry is reassuring. I imagine all of you have your wireless sets going so I need not dwell upon the war news. I am confident that the Allies will come out victorious but the loss of life and property will be considerable.

I hope all of you will read Ruth's article in the Outspan of June 6<sup>th</sup> on "does it matter if we miss the bus". It is one of her best contributions, and she has written many.

A Sunday School teachers' meeting was held last Friday evening when Mr Radford resigned from the Sunday School. Two others have followed since. I have been asked to take over for the present. The anniversary is being held next Sunday and after that the school closes during the public school holidays. By that time, matters may be reorganised.

The President of the Conference, Rev Wilkinson, preached here on Sunday evening and everyone was very greatly impressed. After the service, a social was held in the church parlour when he made another fine speech. He also addressed the Women's Auxiliary on Monday morning. He left for Somerset East after dinner. I knew him very well at Sea Point when we were at Cape Town. He is a fine speaker. A great S.O.D. worker as well.

Wednesday afternoon. Yesterday we entertained a member of the Mission to the Japanese, a Mr Cuthbertson. He is travelling through the country with a lantern and slides. His lecture was quite interesting last night. He left for Middelburg this morning. Mrs McLeod has been staying with us for another week or so and is leaving to go to her daughters near Port Alfred this evening. She has been good company and has helped Mom a good deal.

We have not heard from Douglas yet but had a nice letter from Rex at Grahamstown. He is looking forward to the holidays soon. Grace writes that the new Postmaster has arrived and there are changes in the staff. Ted is due for his holiday but is doubtful if he gets it owing to the war. His mother has recently broken her arm and is in hospital. What is the matter with old people breaking their arms lately. Joe and Blodwen write that their children have been taking part in their school concert and they are to repeat same in the Town Hall shortly. Joe has been elected on their local school committee. Am glad to see he is taking interest in public matters. One of Blodwen's brothers is going into military training this week. Dot reports that Reg is to be X-rayed and I hope the result will be satisfactory.

We have had very mild weather this winter so far, have hardly worn my overcoat or sweater. Ten days time we shall be passing the middle of winter.

Five local Italians have been interned. Some of them were working on a big contract for crushed stones for the Railway. They were using a lot of electricity from our power station. Money has been coming better lately for war funds and today I have sent over £350 to different organisations.

Four of the grandchildren have birthdays this month. Rex and Blodwen's baby on 10<sup>th</sup> and Arthur and Grace's baby on 22<sup>nd</sup>. It will be three years tomorrow since Uncle Herbert died and 17 years on 17<sup>th</sup> that Uncle James passed away. How time flies. I must stop now and hope the arrangement of posting on Wednesdays will be convenient to all. Thanks for all letters received. Much love to all, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
Wednesday June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I am glad to hear that Douglas got home safely and found all well. He says my last Dear All arrived on Friday instead of Monday or Tuesday as formerly. So I shall continue to post on Wednesday when possible. They are expecting Lynne and Kingsley home for the holidays about 27<sup>th</sup>. Lynne will probably find a situation in Vryburg. We have been looking forward to her coming here but naturally it will be nice for her to be near home.

It has been very cold the last few mornings but have not registered many degrees of frost so far. Now that our new storage reservoir is nearly completed, it has been suggested that we let two or three inches of water in and let it freeze so as to provide skating. Needless to say, people have not skates and we want the reservoir for its legitimate purpose as soon as possible. I hope to have the official opening early in July. A law case may still be pending. The contractors say they have lost over £3000 on the job.

We have had all our vines and fruit trees pruned during the last week. I hope we are not too early. They were done last year in July. Some say that August is the best month. However we must watch results.

The week before our Council meeting - fourth Tuesday in each month – is always a busy one for me as we hold generally ten different committee meetings when all the different departments of municipal work comes under review. Two to three days are thus fully occupied. I think this year's record for special meeting of the Council and Committees will be a record one. The war has also brought a lot of extra work, raising funds and now we are busy collecting information regarding the number of cripples in the town and district so that they may derive some benefit from Lord Nuffield's fund of £100,000 provided for their relief. Am also trying to arrange for people to receive or adopt refugee children from Europe.

Our Sunday School Anniversary on Sunday passed off very nicely in spite of the trouble we have had with four teachers resigning. The Sunday School takes holidays the same as the public schools so we shall not be reopening before about the end of July. This will give us time to reorganise. We had fish for our supper on Saturday, and Sunday morning I was so giddy that I could hardly stand and certainly could not walk straight. However we both attended all three services and am none the worse.

We ordered a bag of grapefruit from Jim Butler at Louisvale (5/- per 100). They are very large and nice but they work out rather expensive as we pay carriage. They cannot ship them overseas this year owing to the war and they have large quantities on hand. I wonder what they fetch in England. The war news is very distressing but nevertheless I have not given up faith in the ultimate victory for the Allies. It is a very sad time for France.

Ruth phoned last evening saying she had received a wire from Dick Brown, her brother of course, saying he was passing Alicedale and wanting her to see him there. He is on his way to Port Elizabeth to enlist from Rhodesia. As she was not able to do this, would I see him at the station here as he passed on his way? I accordingly went to the station this a.m. but there was no sign of him. I therefore expect he passed through by last night's train. I should have been pleased to see him as I have not done so since we left Vryburg.

Grace has sent us David's school report to see. He had come top of his class and the report is very good. Hearty congratulations, David. Dot says Reg has been to Johannesburg for X-ray but they have not the report yet. Hope it will be satisfactory. We shall try to spend a weekend at Grass Ridge during the school holidays which begin on Friday. Mr Henderson, a friend from Pretoria, had dinner with us on Tuesday. He showed us much kindness when we were motoring to Potgietersrus on our way to the Game Reserve some years ago. He is a friend of Aunt Eliza's. Dudley Townshend has left for the front but to do not know where. Joyce will most likely be coming to stay with Aunt Eliza for some time. Her house at Rondebosch was surrounded by water recently as the Leesbek river overflowed its banks again. They have had a week of incessant rain lately. Must close with lots of love to each and all from, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
Wednesday June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Poor England. What greater trouble is in store for her. Now she has to stand alone so far as outside help is concerned from her allies. France has let her down badly yet I am not afraid of the consequences. Britain will eventually win the war. The powers of evil as represented by Nazism and Fascism cannot permanently prevail. It is a severe testing of one's faith and I hope no one will lose hope. I do feel sorry for our relations in the old country and shall be glad to hear that none of them have suffered loss. Phil, Uncle Willie's eldest son, is near the east coast and I fear is in the danger zone. My old school at Saffron Walden is also in danger and I expect the children have been evacuated.

I have been receiving applications from parents who are willing to adopt refugees. Most are asking to adopt girls as young as possible. We would like to as well but fear our age is against us as it might be placing an undue responsibility on others after we are gone. We shall have to find some other way of assisting.

Am glad to hear that Ruth and Denis were able to get a lift to Port Elizabeth on Saturday last and spent some time with her brother Dick whom she had not see for some years. I saw him as he passed through on Monday morning. I think it must be quite ten or more years since I saw him last. He has aged a good deal and I am glad to say he has steadied up and is pulling his weight. He has been in Northern Rhodesia. He has left his family in Port Elizabeth. His wife has a job there. I presume the two children are at school there.

On Sunday evening as we came out of church, we shook hands with a stranger, a lady and gent who had arrived that afternoon on a visit. The lady was formerly a schoolgirl here and is now Principle of the Girls' High School at Paarl – near Cape Town. She was Head Girl at Rocklands in Mary's day. They were a very nice family and Uncle James and I knew them well. Her husband is almost stone deaf and was Manager of one of Hepworths branches. We invited Mary and we all enjoyed a chat of old Cradock days. They are motoring through to Aliwal North and down to East London and back to Paarl in time for school. We took them to the Egg Rock and round the town in their car and they spent last evening with Mom whilst I was at Council meeting. Her maiden name was McFarren. She is now Mrs Eccles. They want us to go and visit them when we are at Cape Town. We have no idea of going there at present unless I have to go on official business.

Sunday afternoon I presided at a united service in the Town Hall in connection with the St John's Ambulance Brigade. The hall was full and a very nice service was held. The collection was for the hospital and realised £14. We are amused at reading about Roy and Merle's school concert in the Bloemfontein Town Hall recently. In one of their songs they sang "please give us a penny or two to buy new instruments for our band". The audience started throwing pennies on to the platform. After the curtain was drawn, Roy crept from under it looking for more pennies. The concert was a great success. Roy can play on the piano (with one finger) "All through the Night". A budding Mozart! Dudley Townshend is in camp at Potchefstroom for the present. No word of Joyce coming yet.

Evelyn is expecting Lynne and Kingsley home tomorrow. Cecily is already there. Grace's children have holidays shortly. We suggested that perhaps the boys could come to us but we have not heard. Joe saw Dick on Monday night. I wired to him that he was passing. Dot writes that Reg has the report of X-ray examination. No operation is necessary at present but he has to wear a belt. Some of the works inside have "dropped". Their house was burgled and five others. Natives were caught and their good recaptured. Aunt Eliza has given her bagatelle table to Eric. They are thrilled with it. Pat and Gladys' boy Alan have gone to Hollowdene for the holidays. I am getting a good many applications for children to be adopted. A public meeting is to be held next week about it in the Town Hall. A farewell dance is being given this week to the men who are going to the front. Every evening this week is booked in one way or the other. It certainly keeps us from moping. We are both keeping well but feel the cold. Lots of love, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday July 3<sup>rd</sup>, I did not write  
Wednesday July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

A good deal has happened since I last wrote a fortnight ago. I had wanted to take a rest in the country for some time past and as Uncle Dudley and Aunt Katie came to see us on Saturday afternoon, June 30<sup>th</sup>, they kindly took us back with them. It was a very hurried preparation as we had not made any previous plans but just scrambled a few things into our suitcase and incidentally forgot pyjamas, hair brushes etc. in our hurry, we left about five. We had a puncture in one of the back wheels near Mr Antrobus' farm. Uncle tried to get the jack under the wheel and a native boy, who was passing on a bike, also helped. After some time he sent the boy to Antrobus farm asking for help as his jack slipped etc. However, by the time Mr Antrobus arrived, he had managed the worst part of the job. I supposed we were delayed for three quarters of an hour or more. When we had passed Saunders Nek, we collided with an oncoming motor. The strong headlights rather blinded Uncle. However no very serious damage was done as both cars stopped some distance from each other and after examining their cars, proceeded without having exchanged words with each other. We did not even see the car number. We got to Grass Ridge without further incident about eight. We did not go anywhere except to Ernest Saunders across the river and that by car – as a return of my old complaint recently made walking somewhat painful and difficult. Mrs Willie Saunders came to see us. She is keeping very well. By the way, it was her husband's birthday on 4<sup>th</sup>. Ernest Saunders has been laid up for some weeks with stomach trouble and has been ordered to keep to his bed for a month. The office phoned for me to attend a special Council meeting on Thursday morning so as Uncle was going to the station on Wednesday for petrol etc. we went with him and slept at Aunt Jessie's that night. I left Mom with Aunt Jessie and I went in by train and returned by a mixed goods the same afternoon. Fortunately they have good wireless sets at Grass Ridge and Saltpansdrift and so I was able to keep in touch with the outside world.

Whilst at Grass Ridge, we had a phone message from the Post Office in town saying a telegram had come from Blodwen telling of the sudden death of her mother at Plumstead. Of course we have known for years that her heart was very weak and that the end might come at any time. Blodwen has since written giving later particulars. The attack was very sudden and she died in her daughter's arms. The body was cremated on Wednesday. It is nice that Joe and Blodwen saw them all at Cape Town last April.

Whilst at Fish River station, who should I meet but Willie Saunders and his wife and daughter who had come down that morning from Naboomspruit on a visit to his mother. I did not recognise him at first. He has got much older since we knew him at Vryburg. We hope he will come to town before their return. I only had a few minutes with him.

Uncle Gervase, Rouena, Barbara and the little girl came over to dinner at Saltpansdrif on Sunday and we enjoyed a good chat. Uncle Norman's boys are more or less always at Saltpansdrift. Mr Barnes of course is still foreman there. He is to come into hospital soon to undergo an operation. He took us about the farm to see some of his improvements. We went to the junction of the two rivers and also to the old pear tree which is estimated to be at least two hundred years old. It is still alive but does not bear fruit. The homestead is in need of much repair. The foundations have sunk, wall cracked, door won't shut etc. One door we took off its hinges and sawed off about half an inch at the bottom which did the trick. At Grass Ridge, I did a few jobs too. I took with me a lot of old stamps and soaked off the envelopes so that the stamps can be sold for war funds. I did quite a thousand of them and have a lot more here that I am sending away.

We returned on Monday afternoon with Uncle Norman who spent the night here. His three boys are in frequently for training. All three of them have signed on and expect to be off very soon now. I see in the Midland News that May Winter has married a local man named Bekker. You will be sorry to hear that Mrs Jennings died at Plumstead. More to follow. Dad



34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

My last letter ended rather abruptly. I had hoped to write another sheet before posting but it was decided all of a hurry that I should proceed early the next morning, together with our Council's Attorney and Town Clerk to Port Elizabeth in connection with one of the claims in connection with our water scheme. We left here by car at 8.15 a.m. and were in Port Elizabeth by 1.45, nearly 200 miles. We stopped for refreshment in Grahamstown for about half an hour and saw Ruth for a few minutes. Another stop of half an hour gave us actual travelling time of 4½ hours. The return trip was not quite so fast. The trip was quite successful and has probably saved the town an expensive law suite. On the return trip, we passed a couple of cars which just half an hour before had had a head on collision at the bend of the road. Both cars were so badly damaged that they could not proceed, yet strange to say, no one was injured. Our difficulties are not yet over as we have another of the contractors to deal with.

Ruth is looking very well. Denis is teaching (for experience) for a time at Kingswood. He is joining the officers' training section at Rhodes but will stay at college until the end of the year.

Joe reminds me that the Union Loans certificates I gave each of the grandchildren some yeas ago mature about the end of this year and unless they are reinvested, interest will cease.

Did I tell you that Denis was involved in a motor accident recently? He was in a car with Rev Thompson and a young lady was driving and overturned the car. Rev Thompson was pinned under it but Denis managed to liberate him and then ran for a couple of miles or so and obtained assistance. Rev Thompson was taken to hospital but has since been able to go home. Neither Denis nor the lady driver were hurt.

Blodwen is thinking of taking one of the refugee children when they come. Yesterday we had a meeting and decided to organise locally for the same purpose. I have had about thirty applications so far. Now the Government is taking the organisation over.

Our jasmine is out in flower in the front garden and looks very pretty. The poinsettia on the back stoep is also in flower.

When in Port Elizabeth, I had a conversation over the phone with Blodwen's sister and conveyed condolences in the loss of her mother. The family are trying to sell the property at Plumstead.

We are sorry to hear that Grace's baby had the misfortune to fall off his bed. Hope no permanent injury has resulted. Bees have also taken up their abode at the plot. Her children are learning to make matting. Perhaps they will be able to make their own tennis nets in future.

Joe reports that he has nearly finished paying for his house, which is very good, especially in view of what may be in front of the country in the way of a depression after the war.

I am glad to hear that Reg seems to be making progress. He has had a slight operation which will make the wearing of his belt more comfortable.

Evelyn informs us that Lynne has a position in the Land Bank at Pretoria and was to start on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Douglas and Evelyn and Lynne, Kingsley and Cecily have all been to Pretoria and the Amblers were coming to fetch the children back to school. Shirley had also been to Vryburg.

We are expecting a visit from Nurse Edith Collett and her cousin early in August. I hope they will be able to see Grace and family as well as Joe and Blodwen as they come south. Letters from Grace and Joe this a.m. Grace sends some snaps of baby which are to be sent round. They are very good. Joe reports that they are very busy at the works and extra shifts may be put on in the near future. There was nothing from Dot today. Mary has been to Port Elizabeth for over a week and returned this morning. Mr Thomas has gone to Cape Town on business and may be away for a week or so. Mary is staying with Aunt Eliza in the meantime.

Lots of love to each and all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

There is news to report this week. Yesterday morning we received a letter from Ruth saying she was getting married again shortly, the actual date is not mentioned. We are not altogether surprised at the news as once or twice lately she has referred to a Mr Mackenzie who had been very kind to her. We have not met him but Ruth says he is 18 years her senior and a widower with a married son. Denis seems pleased and Ruth naturally feels that she has struggled for all these years and is feeling tired. We all admit that she has put up a wonderful plucky fight and has won through against tremendous difficulties. I am sure we shall all wish her every happiness in her new state. The wedding is to be very quiet (special licence). She is keeping on her position as Secretary to the Settlers Club for the present and they will stay at Lexham Hotel, where she has been for some time. Her young man used to work at Waterlow and Sons, printers in London. Rex is to remain at the University until the end of the year and in the meantime is undergoing training in the Officers' Training Corps.

Then there is another piece of news. The war has brought about many marriages. The latest is Uncle Gervase's youngest daughter, Pam, has quite recently been keeping company with a son of Mr Kew of the firm Cull and Kew. He has retired from the business (the father) and is farming. The son is going to the war in a few days and they got married at the weekend. We have seen him a few times recently and he is quite a handsome young man. Pam is working in Metcalf's office in place of one of the staff who is on active service. As it was in the beginning etc.

We are expecting the local regiment to be leaving in a few days and have arranged to hold a farewell service in the town Hall on Sunday afternoon. Talking of services, Ernest's son, Guy, took the service in the Anglican church last Sunday evening as the minister has a throat infection. I took the service in the Methodist church in the morning.

Last week we had the Sunday School teachers' meeting here, about twenty all told. It was quite a nice evening and I think the Sunday School will make a good start. School reopened after the school holidays last Sunday.

Talking of war weddings, we were not able to go to Middelburg to see Ethne's youngest sister married last Saturday. We hear it was a very nice gathering.

Mr Thomas has been to Cape Town on business to see if he can restart after the fire. He was taken ill on the train and had to see the Railway doctor at Naauwpoort. He is expected back tomorrow night. I do not know what success he has had but no doubt shall hear in due course.

We are sorry to hear that Aunt Emmie is getting very deaf. She has been to a specialist but the treatment has not given her any relief. Gladys' Alan and Eric's Pat have been to Vryburg (Eric's farm) for the school holidays. They are both back at Rondebosch to school.

Uncle Bertie was taken suddenly ill on the farm last week and brought in to town the same night. He has been X-rayed and they fear stones are the cause of the trouble. He is better at present. His only son is going to the front.

Joe reports that the workshops are working overtime and may go on day and night shifts.

You may remember when at East London at the funfair, Rev Stephenson, our former minister at Observatory, came and spoke to us. We have just seen that his wife had a stroke at Mossel Bay, where they are stationed, and died whilst he was away in the country holding a service. She was a very nice lady.

I see that Mr Tom Pierce of Kroonstad has gone to the front. Later. Pam Collett is not married, only engaged.

Grace is the only one we received post from this a.m. Ted and Pam had gone to Doonside for a fortnight's holiday. Baby Frank has not been too well. Miss Hicks is staying with her whilst Ted is away. The change will do them both good. Pam is growing very tall.

Lots of love to each and all from  
Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Another month gone and less than five months to Christmas Day. Have any of you given any thought as to how you propose spending Xmas? We have not yet and I expect most people will consider that to stay at home is best. However, we shall see. I hope the war will be over by then. I consider that Hitler is beaten already and that he cannot hold out very much longer.

Today is another important day. We heard from Ruth on Saturday that she had decided to get married today by special licence and no one in Grahamstown was to know anything about it. I had thought that perhaps I might run down by train on Tuesday night and back but have not done so. Will send her a "good will telegram" during the morning. I am sure we all as a family wish her everything of the best. She has worked very hard and deserves a much easier time. She will still carry on her writing under her name as Ruth Butler and is not giving up the secretaryship of the Settlers Club. No doubt you all will write to her at the same address (Lexham Hotel).

We are having very peculiar weather. As I write (seven fifteen a.m.) a little rain is falling and there have been a few claps of thunder. The temperature the last few days has been very mild, up to 80 maximum and 51 minimum. We have not had a fire in the dining room since last Saturday.

Sadness was cast over the town by the death of the wife of our electrical engineer on Thursday morning. It appears her complaint was diagnosed as Hodgkin's Disease. A sickness which affects the glands and from which there is no cure discovered so far. The funeral took place on Saturday afternoon having been delayed so that her relations from Northern Transvaal could be present. They have recently built a nice new house on top of the hill. They have no family. Her husband is of German descent. They were members of the Methodist Church.

On Sunday afternoon we held a farewell service in the Town Hall for the men who are due to leave shortly for the war. The hall was packed and everyone says the service was a success. I was very glad when it was over. We are observing the two minutes at noon each day but some storekeepers say it interferes with their business.

Mr Thomas has returned from his visit to Cape Town. He was taken ill on the train going down and had to see the railway doctor at Naauwpoort. He was not well enough to do any business in Cape Town and saw a specialist there. I have no knowledge as to what he intends doing in the future.

Rex is passing through tonight from Grahamstown on holiday. We shall go over to the station to see him for the few minutes the train stops here. He has done very well in his exams this term.

We are expecting nurse Edith and her niece, Mrs Pitt, to arrive by car from Breyten on Friday or Saturday. They are on their way to East London. They are not coming via Kroonstad or Bloemfontein.

After dinner, Half an inch has fallen up to now and it has all sunk into the ground. We still have plenty of water in our tanks. Grace writes that she is needing rain. Dot says she wants two little refugee girls.

Aunt Rosa's daughter, Eileen, is living here at the Masonic and her two girls are at the Convent. The eldest has a deformed foot. We hope to see a good deal of them. She is just like her mother.

We were at the Poplars last evening. Christine is leaving the Post Office and going to Cape Town to take up nursing.

There is not much news to report except what I have mentioned so will ring off. Uncle Bertie is better again and is on the farm. Harvey Brown's little boy cut his hand very badly in a chaff cutter and has been in hospital for some time.

Lots of love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
as Wednesday August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I suppose that as Monday was a Bank Holiday, all our postal arrangements will be upset as usual and we must not expect to get our letters from the members of the family until after I have posted. However, we may be thankful that we still have the means of communicating with each other. There are many involved in the various war zones who cannot get news at all from their friends. So far as I know, there has not been a single mail lost on the South African route since the war started. We have much to be thankful for.

We have not heard from Ruth since her marriage but hope she is having a good rest at Port Alfred.

Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate phoned from Fish River to enquire if they could come to us last Friday. We were pleased to see them and Beryl and one of Leslie's sons. Leslie has his daughters at the Convent School as they found it too difficult to run their farm school. What with teachers getting sick and having other peoples' children to look after, it was not worth it. Leslie has been to Pretoria to try and get a post in the army but has not been called up. All seemed very well. They were glad to see Uncle Walter and Olive. They also went to see Aunt Eliza. The same day we had Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate to dinner. I was to have gone to Port Elizabeth for the weekend but as we were expecting Nurse Edith and Mrs Pitt and her baby from Breyten for the weekend, I did not go. They did not turn up on Friday or Saturday but on Saturday evening Uncle Jack phoned to say they had turned up there that afternoon, having had motor trouble along the road and Edith was ill with ear trouble and they would not be coming to us before Tuesday. Since then we hear we are not to expect them till Wednesday. They want to leave again for East London on Friday so we shall not see much of them. Uncle Gervase and I have been elected to attend the Methodist Synod at Graaff Reinet which opens on Saturday and if our visitors have left by then, Mom will also go with us. Mom has not been over the mountain since she went with Grandpa Collett many years ago. I have never seen the mountain in daylight. We shall be due back Tuesday. I hope we do not have a similar experience as the Weavers had when they went over on their way to the Wilderness for the short holidays. Something went wrong with their car on top of the mountain and they were stuck there from five in the morning to five that evening. Not a single car passed them all the day. Fortunately they had food with them but it was very cold and with five children, it was far from enjoyable.

One of Uncle James' old Sunday School boys died last week, a Mr Weir. I went to see him a few times. He was very fond of James who exerted a great influence over his life.

Ernest's wife is laid up with flu for the last few days. She works very hard for the paper and is full of good works. Fortunately two of her girls are with her and she has a trained nurse who hires a room there. Mary is also available if necessary. By the way, Christine is leaving the telephone service at the end of the month and is going to train for nursing at Cape Town.

I am sorry to see by advertisement in Midland News that Mr Thomas is trying to start a business again. He saw a specialist whilst in Cape Town and he is on a diet scale but looks very ill all the same. I fear the worry will be too much for him.

Those of you who have visited us by car will be glad to know that I have had the garage gates altered to open outwards as it was too awkward for most people to drive out with them opening inwards. Come and see for yourselves.

We expect to hear this week that Ted and Pam are back from their visit to Doonside. Grace was saying that she was wanting a holiday. We hope she will come and introduce baby Charles to us.

On Friday next it will be 19 years since Harold passed away. Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup>. It is now decided that Uncle Gervase takes Mom and I to Graaff Reinet early on Saturday morning and return on Tuesday. This afternoon I am to open a Roman Catholic bazaar.

Love Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock, Box 141  
Wednesday August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Here we are back again from Graaff Reinet safe and sound. We arrived at 1.30 yesterday afternoon and as the house had been shut up since Saturday morning, we went straight to a café and had lunch there and then home. It has been a pretty full week since I last wrote so must hurry over the various happenings.

Nurse Edith and Cathie only arrived a little before dinner time on Wednesday. It appears they had car trouble about 14 miles out of Kroonstad and lost some hours so did not call to see Grace and co and went right through Bloemfontein without stopping. They were evidently rather out in their geography as they thought they would touch Cradock before reaching Fish River. They arrived there on Saturday afternoon and we had been expecting them on Friday. Had they let us know I would have gone to Port Elizabeth for the weekend to attend a special meeting of Friends. Neither Ernest nor Mary could go so Cradock was not represented. Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate and Beryl and one of Leslie's children slept with us on Friday and might have stayed over the weekend only we were expecting Edith and co. However, it was very nice to see them. Leslie has two of his girls at the Convent School. I had been invited to open the Convent bazaar on Wednesday but as our visitors had just arrived, Mom could not accompany me. However the Mother Superior sent one of their smallest pupils (who by the way attends our Sunday School) with a bouquet. She made quite a pretty little speech in our passage and curtsied very sweetly. They had a very fine display of goods at the bazaar. Three of our nieces are boarders there so I entertained them to tea. There were several novelties there. One was painted serviette rings made out of old photograph films after being washed off. They sold very well. Of course their fancy needlework was very good. The Sisters are very practical. I am told that they made all the desks, table and window frames for the native convent with their own hands. They work for love, not pay. Now to go back to our visitors. Nurse Edith was troubled with an abscess in her ear on the way down and had to rest in bed practically all the time she was at Uncle Jack's at Fish River. She saw doctor when she came to town and was able to get some relief. Cathie's baby – ten months old – is a fine little chap, very friendly and gives no trouble. They brought a nurse girl with them. They are very pleased with Cradock and Cathie would like to run a large boarding house here and made certain enquiries regarding one that is for sale. She is consulting her father on the matter first. They left by car on Friday morning for East London, calling at Daggaboer – Edith's old home – on the way.

Uncle Gervase came in on Friday afternoon and slept here so as to be off by eight on Saturday for Graaff Reinet. We locked up the house after an early breakfast and arrived at Graaff Reinet in just under three hours. It is about 40 years since Uncle Gervase has travelled over the mountain and the first time I have seen it in daylight. Mom has very vivid recollections of the journey by cart and horses with Father many years ago. The road is very steep in some places but we managed quite safely. Needless to say I noticed the difference in altitude and felt queer for some time after arriving in Graaff Reinet. Rev Weavers had booked accommodation for us at a boarding house. The town is full of men waiting to go to the front. We might have gone to the Leggs but they had some of the ministers staying with them. Of course we saw a good deal of them. We were just in time for morning tea with the Synod delegates and met Mrs D. Faulds who lived just opposite Aunt Eliza. Mr and Mrs Barnes were there and Rev Stephenson's son from Observatory. Ethne Collett was also there. She has just become engaged to her cousin and I think it is to be a war wedding.

The Synod had arranged for a retreat at Brooklyn in the afternoon. Alan and Alice of course were host and hostess. Kathleen was there to help and Aunt Letty was also there. Quite one hundred guests attended. The function was held in the open air, under the trees and everything was splendidly arranged. Very fine addresses were given, one by Mr Redfern, Principal of Kingwood. There was not much time for social conversation but we arranged to go to Vrede on Sunday morning to have lunch there.

The evening session was taken up with an address by Rev Kirkby, the Minister who was intended to come here when Mr Weavers was appointed instead. After the service we spent some time with Rev and Mrs Legg. After breakfast Sunday morning, we motored to Vrede, about 25 miles from town. Aunt Letty, Florrie and Kathleen and their respective families were at home, or most of them were. They all seemed very well. Kathleen has been in doctor's hands for some time but was better. Her youngest goes to school on Mondays to Friday and home for the weekends. With other visitors, I think there were about 20 to dinner – guinea fowl etc. etc. Uncle Gervase had a good walk round part of the farm which interested him. All enjoyed a good rest and afternoon tea on the lawn. They are all very keen on war work, knitting being constantly on the go. After service in the evening, we again saw the Leggs and met Rev McGaghey whom we knew very well in Cape Town. For yarns it would be difficult to beat both he and Mr Legg.

Monday was kept very close to Synod business as it was desired to finish the work in one day. This was managed by six p.m. Old Mr Holden, 87, was there as usual and took a very keen interest in all the proceedings. He is subject to severe fits of coughing and twice had to leave the room. He says he is coming to see us one of these days. In the evening, the Mayor, Mr Kingwell, who is also a member of the Synod, had arranged a reception in the Town Hall. Their hall is larger and more attractive than the Cradock one but is not good from an acoustic point of view. The Chairman of the Synod asked me to reply on behalf of the laymen and Rev Griffen, who stayed with Grace and Ted when a Synod was held in Kroonstad some years ago, replied for the Ministers. It was a very pleasant evening. Some old favourite songs were sung such as "Because", "It is quiet down here", "Jerusalem" etc. Two of the younger Ministers also sang hymns.

On Tuesday morning the Mayor motored me round to see some of the Municipal undertakings in which I am interested. We were able to leave by 10.30 for home. The weather was quite warm except at nights. We stayed at a boarding house which was not too good but I have stayed at hotels which were not much better. We arrived home at 1.30 but as there were no provisions in the house, we had lunch at a café, after which Uncle Gervase went home. He has very kindly had Mary and Miss Maude Miller, Aunt Eliza's neighbour who has been so good to her for years but who for some months has been far from well, on his farm for a change. I hope it will do her great good.

We did not go to see Aunt Eliza yesterday afternoon as I was not feeling too well. I had been reading aloud in the car coming back the latest newspaper and perhaps the dodging about to avoid the sun shining on to the paper as I was reading may have caused the discomfort. Needless to say I had never been drunk in my life but found it difficult to keep steady so I went to bed early. However, this morning I am better though not too grand. I saw her before going to office and to my surprise found her in bed with a touch of flu. She hopes to be better in a day or so but of course misses Mary's attention and help. Mom is going up to see her and post my letters at the same time. Mr Thomas too has been to the doctor recently. We brought a beautiful lot of snowdrops and violets from Vrede and some are going to Eliza. Nurse Loscombe goes to her two or three times a week. The native girl does not sleep in any more.

It is to be hoped that the big losses the Germans are losing lately will have the desired effect of hastening the close of the war. I have not had any reply to my letter to the relations in England re the sending out any of the children to this country. We should be pleased to do anything we could for them.

Must close now as Mom is ready to go. Much love to all. Thanks for letters from Grace, Joe and Dot to hand.

Lots of love from  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. P.O. Box 141  
Wednesday August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

There have not been excursions during the past week to report so I expect my letter will be shorter than some recent ones. We have had delightful weather – especially in the daytime, but we had a slight frost on Saturday morning. Most days the maximum temperature has been between 70 and 80 in the shade. Trees are coming into bud and I am fearful that we may get some late frosts and spoil our fruit crop. However we must take it as it comes.

The week before the Council meeting (4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in each month) is always a busy one as so many committee meetings are held. On Monday last I had only seven such which occupied from 9.30 a.m. to a few minutes to six p.m. Then in addition, one of the contractors for the new dam invited the Councillors to lunch at the hotel. I hurried back from this function as I anticipated Mom would be quite alone and I had the next set of meetings at three but was glad to find that Uncle Norman and Aunt Gladys and Harry Collett and his wife and Ethnie had dropped in to dinner. Ethnie is to be married tomorrow to her cousin who is a mere boy and has signed on for active service and expects to leave for the front this week. Uncle Norman's three sons are in the same regiment.

We turned the water from Grass Ridge into the new dam yesterday and I expect by this afternoon it will be full. Then we have the job of cleaning out the old dam which has not been done for some years. We sincerely hope our troubles in this respect are now behind us. We have two other big schemes before us. These are housing schemes, one of £15,000 for the location and the other £10,000, for poor whites. We have to spend £8,000 of this before the end of March next and we have not started on them yet. We are very hopeful that now we have doubled our storage capacity of water that we shall be able to embark on a water borne sewage scheme. When that is an accomplished fact, there will be no curtailing the development of the town.

We heard over the wireless last evening that there is an urgent need for homes for evacuees from England for children from 10 to 15 years of age. I think if we had a couple of girls, they could be very useful to Mom. What do you think?

Douglas has been to Pretoria lately and saw Jamie and others. Lynne has started work at the Standard Bank in Vryburg – Harold's old bank.

Grace writes that she would like to visit Dot. We had hoped she would come this way. We shall see. Ted and Pam have had a nice holiday at Doonside with his parents. Blodwen is looking to spend Xmas with her folk, probably at Port Elizabeth. No one else has made any suggestions for Xmas so far.

Aunt Eliza seems better of her flu attack but it has left her husky and very feeble on her legs. Lumbago or sciatica seems to be the trouble at present. Next month she will pass her 81<sup>st</sup> anniversary.

After dinner. We had Uncle Norman's three sons, each in their uniforms, to dinner today. They have come in for drill. Letters from Evelyn, Grace and Dot this morning, all very interesting. Many thanks for same. We are going to see the new dam in a minute or two. Olive is coming for us so must close. We are both keeping well. My giddiness is passing over.

Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

We did not have any fuss or ceremony with the opening of our new storage reservoir on Tuesday last as I did not consider the expense was justified under war conditions. It may, however, interest you to know that the dam is approximately 900 feet long by 130 wide and water will stand about 11 feet deep. The capacity is about 27 million gallons. 205,000 cubic yards of earth have been removed and 18,000 pockets of cement used in its construction. The cost is in the neighbourhood of 24,000 pounds. The work commenced on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1938 and completed on August 20<sup>th</sup> 1940. This means that the town water supply in storage is just doubled. Our next big schemes are £10,000 building scheme for the poorer section of the Europeans and £15,000 for building houses for the location, then we hope to tackle a water borne sewage scheme. I do not know if I shall live to see all these undertakings completed but hope so. The two first will be commenced at once. Practically the whole of yesterday I spent with Mr "Jacaranda" Jameson, the head of the Government housing scheme going into details with him and the Town Engineer and all today will be spent in the same way.

We held our last Council meeting for the Municipal year last evening. This concludes my third year of office as Mayor. It has been a very interesting experience, some particulars of which I may give you later on as I have not got them by but they are at the office. I am writing this as usual before breakfast. Nothing is decided. so far as I know, what is to happen next Monday afternoon when the election of Mayor and Deputy takes place and then of course we shall know.

I have spent some time lately in going through old letters etc. Most of my notes of addresses etc. that I have given from time to time have been consigned to the wastepaper basket. I have heaps of newspaper cuttings which as time permits, will also go the same way. Of course they are very interesting to me but I fear none of the family would care to be troubled with them. It will take me quite a long time to finish looking over them.

I am sorry to report that Aunt Kate Dudley has been in hospital for some days with a nasty attack of sciatica or some kindred complaint which is giving her much pain. The doctor thinks that an abscess in her mouth may be the cause of the trouble.

After dinner. Last evening Mrs Willie Saunders, May and Clifford had supper with us. They are all looking well. Willie did not come to Cradock when he was down from the Transvaal. He is now guarding bridges for the Defence Force somewhere in the Transvaal. Ernest Saunders at Grass Ridge has been on the sick list for some weeks but is getting better now. Uncle Dudley is in again to dinner and will stay the night. Mary also had dinner with us today.

Letters from Grace, Joe, Blodwen and Dot to hand this morning. Gay has some of the children on the sick list again but are getting better. Joe is working overtime on munitions.

I have filled in an application form for two evacuee girls, sisters, if possible. I hear over the wireless today that 300 are on the water. There have been very few applications from Cradock for children so far.

As stated above, the following figures may interest some of you. During the past twelve months I have attended 33 Council meetings, 180 Committee meetings of the Council, 49 inspections for the Council, including 15 legal consultations which involved two trips each to Cape Town, Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth, one to Umtata, 99 functions, bazaars, etc. etc. outside the Council besides a regular daily attendance at the Mayors Parlour of some hours duration. The total number of meeting and functions is over 360.

I am glad to say we are both keeping well and busy. Aunt Eliza has been out in her chair today for the first time for some weeks. She seems rather better than when I wrote last week. We shall be looking to see Rex on Monday night as he passes through to Grahamstown on his last term of school. He expects to pass his matric this year. Lynne is at work in Vryburg. Mom is not writing this week but sends her love to all. Ruth and her husband were presented with a decorated cake on the bowling green Grahamstown recently. Very nice affair. Lots of love, Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

It is a very cold morning. I have just taken the temperature and find we have had one of the coldest nights of this winter – seven degrees of frost. The birdbath is a block of ice. It was twenty degrees colder last night than the night before. The maximum was 16 degrees lower than the previous day. We had a fire last evening as it was so cold. Our fruit trees are all coming into leaf, I hope the crop will not be spoilt.

I suppose you will be wanting to know what has happened about the Mayorship. The election took place at a special meeting of the Council on Monday afternoon with the result that Mr Cull was elected and I, Deputy. This will relieve me of the necessity of attending at the office daily as I have done for the past three years and of course there will be a good deal less responsibility. Both Mr Cull and I were nominated but I withdrew in his favour. They also nominated Era Venter again as last year but he also withdrew. Of course I am on a number of Committees. So that's that. Some of our friends think I ought to take a holiday as the strain has been pretty strenuous, especially during the last year. We have not decided anything but what do you think? I still feel that I want to see you all in your homes again but the altitude of some of them is rather trying, yet I feel inclined to risk it in spite of doctor's advice. We do not care about travelling in the heat of summer or the cold of winter. The Spring and Autumn always seem to me to be the best times. We do not like being away when the fruit is on the trees. We do not know if any of you have made any plans for visiting us at Xmas. War conditions also have to be considered although I do not think we shall be seriously affected. Then there is also the fact that we have put in an application for two evacuee girls – sisters if possible. We do not know if they will be granted or if under new conditions of the German threat to sink any vessels carrying children over war zones may prevent anymore from being sent abroad. Let us have your views quickly please. Whilst I think of it, you must not forget that the new postage rate comes into force on 16<sup>th</sup>. 1½ per ounce for letters in the Union and 1½ per half ounce for overseas. I hope I will not forget as I would be sorry for you to have to pay excess on my letters.

In last week's letter I enclosed copy of programme of a grand concert we went to. The Russian singer has a wonderful voice but only one song was in English. The pianist is a wonderful player. It reminded us of when we heard the famous Paderewski in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester with Uncle Willie. Neither players had any music in front of them. We enjoyed it.

You have heard of Jacaranda Jamison. He is one of the head Government men of the housing scheme. He spent three days here last week. He paid me the compliment of placing my age at 58! So I must be quite juvenile looking. Kate Dudley is still in hospital suffering a good deal of pain with sciatica. She hopes to go to Port Alfred when she can travel. Dudley comes in frequently and stays with us. He feels very lonely on the farm.

Joe writes that they have formed a Railway Brigade in Bloemfontein. There have been some mysterious bomb explosions in the town. Blodwen's photo appears in the local paper recently in connection with a suggestion for using up odd pieces of wool. They are busy gardening there as well. We saw Rex on Monday night as he passed through to Kingswood School for the last time. He expects to pass his matric at the end of the year. We see in the paper that Bull Metcalf's father, Rev Metcalf, has died. I was on a Conference Committee with him years ago in connection with the formation of a Church Fire Insurance Scheme which has proved a great success. Douglas and Evelyn write that Lynne is very happy in her work at Barclays Bank in Vryburg. Uncle Owen is up there again as two of the sons-in-law are at the training camp. Eric also wants to go and there is talk of the school on their farm being closed next year. Dot says Alan wants to be a conductor, not a bus conductor, but a band. Later. Letters from Grace and Ruth. Ted is on awkward hours, so irregular. Baby has not been well and David troubled with earache. Ruth is very happy and is looking forward when the war is over to have a trip overseas. Much love to each and all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I am glad to say that Aunt Kate Dudley is out of hospital and has been staying with us since Monday morning. Uncle Dudley has been in each weekend and is here now hoping to take her home after breakfast. Then they look to go to Port Alfred for a week or so when we hope she will be quite well again. Her trouble has been an acute attack of sciatica. She has had a large number of injections but it has been very painful. She is glad to be out of hospital.

Joyce Townshend arrived on Saturday night with Raymond. He is five now and is full of beans. Aunt Eliza is naturally very glad to have them, especially as Mary has been called in to nurse Mr Cursons who has been laid up for a few weeks suffering from flu and double pneumonia. Am glad to say the last reports were that he was slightly better. He is not working for the Midland News now but is secretary to the hospital – a part time job.

Joyce brought Aunt Eliza down here on Monday afternoon and we had quite a family gathering. Besides ourselves, Dulcie and May also came. They were all pleased to see Aunt Kate and Raymond was thrilled with the swing and bird's fountain. We hope they will come down often. Joyce called to see Mr Metcalf on her way home. Dulcie, May and I took it in turns to push the chair.

We had frost some nights last week but this morning minimum record is 57, which is 24 degrees higher than the night before. It has been working up for rain and a few drops – 3 points – fell. My tanks are getting low. Our wisteria is nicely coming into flower and it will not be long before the Virginia creeper flowers. Our figs were frost bitten and a few of the vines are showing new leaves. The garden boy seems to be doing very well.

Tomorrow afternoon the W.C.T.U. is holding their monthly meeting here – we expect from about 15 to 20.

We listened in on Sunday afternoon to the service from Johannesburg in connection with the day of prayer. It was a very fine service. Each of the churches here held their own service.

I have spent a good deal of time during the past week in re-reading some of my brother's old letters and destroying them. They have been very interesting and illuminating. I have cut out portions of some of them which have reference to, or are of special interest to, some of you and you will find them enclosed.

I have cleared out of the Mayor's Parlour and handed over to the new Mayor. I feel quite lost not having to pay my daily visit to the town office although I do go up most days. I am on ten different Municipal committees so that will give me some interest. At present I feel as though my work in Cradock has finished. So far Joe is the only one who has commented on our suggested holiday. No doubt we may have other letters during the day. Dot was only able to send a postcard last week, she was so busy but all were well. Milner, Dick and Dudley Townshend have all left camp and are now probably on the east coast steaming northwards. After dinner. Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate have let for Grass Ridge. It looks as though rain is not far off, it is very hot and overcast.

Grace report that the children are better of their colds and are back at school. Ted is able to get some time off for doing odd jobs at home. Dot is helping Reg at his office every day from 9 to 1 and is enjoying the work. Joe is still working overtime and all are well there.

Thanks for suggestions re holiday. Will let you know when we have decided anything. No letter from Vryburg this week.

Lots of love to all  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Today Aunt Eliza attains her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. I am sure you all congratulate her and wish her much peace and comfort. We shall go up to see her during the day. It is a great comfort to her and us that Joyce and Raymond are with her. She is the second in our generation to pass the 81 milestone. Uncle Joe was 81½ when he died.

Joe will be 39 tomorrow and we are sure we all wish him many happy returns of the day. He has joined the S.A.R. and Harbours Brigade but I hope he will not have to go to the front. Am glad to hear they have had good rains and their garden is doing nicely.

On Sunday afternoon we went to see Uncle Walter and Olive but they were out so went across the road to see the Websters (Vryburg) and they were also out. However they came to us after service and had a good chat. They were interested in hearing of Douglas and family.

Mary is still nursing Mr Cursons. Am sorry to say the latest reports are not at all encouraging.

On Monday I was overhauled by Dr Scholtz again. He says the heart muscles are hardening and my blood pressure is below normal – 150 – whatever that may mean. He says that undoubtedly a change to the coast would do me much more good than going up country so we are in a quandary as what is the best to do. Under the circumstances, I expect it will result in doing nothing but just staying where we are for the present. We are, however, making enquiries about East London. No one seems likely to be coming this way for Xmas.

The excitement immediately before us is the total eclipse of the sun on Tuesday afternoon October 1<sup>st</sup>. Special trains are being brought here from Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and other places for the event. The Astronomer Royal is taking observations here and the town will probably have the largest influx of visitors it has ever had. It is calculated that it will be some hundreds of years before a similar eclipse will be visible in South Africa again. Astronomers from Holland were coming but have not heard from them since their country fell into the hands of Hitler. The Broadcasting Corporation are sending staff to broadcast the event all over the world from here. So Cradock will be definitely on the map that day.

Later. Letters from Grace and Dot this morning. All well at both homes. Dot is hoping Kingsley will go to her for the short holidays but is expecting her little boys may develop mumps as they are playing with neighbours children who have it. Mrs Hudson Senior has gone to Johannesburg to see Trixie. She hopes it will not be necessary for her to go to East London for the summer. It was Gwen (Leslie's wife's) birthday last week. Hope she is better than she was. Grace says she was able to leave her baby with Pam whilst she and Ted went to tennis one afternoon. Pam was entrusted to bath and feed the youngster. They are wanting rain in Kroonstad badly.

In looking through old letters this week I came across Ted's telegram to me at Cape Town dated September 15<sup>th</sup> 1934 saying he was promoted to first grade which might mean changes. That was six years ago exactly. The changes have not come yet. At that time we were almost decided to settle in Kroonstad instead of Cradock. We wish we could get Ted transferred here but it does not seem possible. Uncle Dudley and Kate have gone to Port Alfred. Aunt Kate is better but not able to resume her duties. She is looking forward to the sea air. Aunt Jessie and Neville had dinner with us this week. The local troop is expecting to get orders to go to camp very soon now. They have been waiting for months now. Mr Poole from East London spent the day with us yesterday. He came to see about a property his daughter wants to purchase and run a large boarding house here in town. Suppose they will decide soon.

I have seen Aunt Eliza this morning and she has had letters from a number of members of the family and other friends. Joyce wheels her about the house and down here sometimes. Today is too windy to be out and it seems to be working up for rain. We have had one inch this month so far. I must close now as I see I have come to the bottom of the sheet.

Lots of love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock.  
as Wednesday September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I must ask you to excuse mistakes as I am typing under great difficulties. Doctor has ordered me to bed for some days and it is awkward to see the keyboard. The least exertion sends me into a bath of perspiration and yet I feel that I must write my usual epistle. As I told you last week, Doctor examined me and said my blood pressure was 160. One Saturday morning I was not feeling up to the mark but went over to the station to see the Cradock boys go off to camp for their course of training. Uncle Gervase drove me over and back as he had slept here the night before. I felt giddy more or less all day and was not able to do any work. The night before, Mom and I had gone to a grand concert in the Town Hall and I was uncomfortable all the time we were there. Sunday I was not able to go to Sunday School or keep my appointments. Mary was here yesterday morning and suggested I had better have the doctor again. He came about five and ordered me to bed and here I am. He took my blood pressure again and found it had dropped to 130. He wants me to stay in bed for a few days, which is very indefinite. I must not trouble about Council meeting tonight or anything else. He said he would be perfectly candid with me but has not told me yet what he thinks except that I should not think of going up country. I am expecting him to

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Dear Cousins,

Tuesday morning, LO./30

I have blown in and found the dear man struggling with the typewriter on his tummy in bed so have offered to finish his letter for him. I will now write at his dictation.

A letter has come from Rex this morning saying he and sixty other boys are coming up from Kingswood on the morning of the first by special train returning again after having seen the eclipse, I have told him he must come to us as he has never been to our house. The Rev Smith of Port Elizabeth will be coming to us also some of the Blunsons, from Port Elizabeth.

The new Mayoress had a very nice At Home on Thursday afternoon in the Town Hall.

Denis writes to say he will have to stay at University until the end of 1941 according to the terms of his bursary.

We are putting down grass in the yard at the back between the tanks, it will be more restful for the eyes and feet.

Wednesday noon. Still in bed

Doctor has not been down yet, hope he will let me get up today (a vain hope, M.B.) Would like to go and see the Boys School Gym display on the sports ground.

Much love to you all, yours affectionately  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

I am glad to be able to sit at my desk and commence my usual letter to you. Last week I tried to write with the typewriter on my lap in bed but doctor and Mary stopped me. I am glad to say that I am feeling much better but still very shaky on my legs. That will improve very soon I hope.

Mary, I understand, wrote to each of you about me as on Friday I had a wire from Dot asking me to wire on Saturday how I was. I replied that the progress was satisfactory and that I hoped to emerge from the temporary partial eclipse without any material diminution of vitality. Aunt Emmie also wired from Cape Town. I am sorry if my indisposition has caused any serious anxiety. Douglas wrote hoping for speedy recovery. Grace also wrote to us and Mary offering to come down for a fortnight with baby and we wired accepting her offer and probably before I finish this letter, we shall hear when to expect her. Joe and Blodwen have also written. Joe is coming down for the long weekend this week, if he can get leave. Blodwen has also kindly offered to help but I hope ere long we shall be able to get away for a change as suggested by doctor. He does not want me to go before he sees the effect of the change of medicine I am to commence with today. It has been a trying week and I have tried to be patient and give as little trouble as possible but of course Mom gets tired and we shall be glad of Grace's help. Mary is still nursing Mr Cursons who seems to be getting better. Hope of his recovery was almost abandoned a few days ago. Joyce too has been very useful and attentive. Aunt Eliza has been down in her chair a few times to see me and there has been no lack of callers, in fact it is possible some days I may have had too many. Well, I hope I have said enough about myself. I'm very thankful for all the love and attention I have received and hope I will not give any further cause for anxiety.

The eclipse is over and was a most wonderful sight. Weather effects could not have been better. Rex wrote that sixty boys from Kingswood and other schools were coming to see the eclipse. They turned up after breakfast on Tuesday. He was looking very well and we were able to have him to supper. Other meals he had on the train. We had previously arranged to entertain Rev Smith from Port Elizabeth. He arrived on Monday evening and Mr and Mrs Blunson and daughter arrived by car about 2.30 Tuesday afternoon, just in time for the eclipse. Olive had kindly offered to take us onto the hill to see the effect so Mom and Rev Smith with them and I followed with the Blunsons. This was the first time I had been out for over a week. Am glad to say am none the worse for it. The eclipse was a wonderful sight. The shadow gradually creeping over the sun until it was entirely obscured was too wonderful. The temperature dropped about seven degrees, the deepening darkness was awesome. Flowers shut themselves up and the stillness could be almost felt. The totality lasted about four minutes then a sudden stream of light burst through the darkness with strange suddenness – such a contrast to the slowly creeping darkness before the totality. In a few moments it was broad daylight again and the hundreds of cars dispersed. We were fortunately standing near to a car which had its wireless going all the time. The scientists' running description of what was happening was most interesting. It is a sight we shall never have the opportunity of seeing again. Rex left after supper and all our other visitors left after breakfast so we are back to normal once more. Letter from Grace this a.m. does not say when she is coming. I do not think it is really necessary though of course we shall be delighted to see her and the new baby. We hope Joe will arrive on Saturday morning. Doctor still advises us to go to the coast but we have not made any plans yet. I will try to answer all your letters as soon as possible. I cannot work as fast as I used to. It is Grace's birthday today and Douglas' on Friday. I have written to both of them. Next week perhaps I will give a list of callers.

I could write more but think I have said enough for this week. Lots of love to each and all from your loving

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

At about 6.30 this morning Mary phoned from Mr Cursons' house that he passed away at 2.30 this morning. He has been ill for about two months with flu, double pneumonia and pleurisy. He has suffered considerable pain and has not had the physical strength to fight against his illness. We shall all miss him very much. He has meant a great deal to the town and district. I am sorry that I have been too ill myself to go and see him as often as I would have liked. We were great friends. The funeral is tomorrow and I shall try to attend.

I am glad to be able to report that I am feeling much better this week. I had a very good tonic at the weekend in the visit of Joe and Roy. They arrived by train about ten thirty – an hour late – on Saturday morning. I did not go to the station to meet them. Roy has grown a good deal and seems well. We were sorry to hear that Merle was not well when they left on Friday night. After we had gone to bed on Saturday evening, the phone rang about ten giving a telegram from Blodwen that Merle had developed measles and one of the servants was away. It was a question if he should take Roy out of bed and catch the eleven p.m. train back home. However he decided to stay as nothing could be done and no seat had been booked on the train. We hope to hear today how they have got on. Joe seemed very well. He is working very hard – from seven in the morning to about nine at night with only one hour break for dinner. He has not had word when he may be called up for active service. Douglas says he has been turned down three times, not on account of health but owing to the accident he had some years ago to his eye. Denis will have to continue his studies at Rhodes until the end of 1941 but may go into training for a month or so during the long holidays.

Aunt Eliza saw the eclipse from Metcalf road overlooking the hospital. Joyce and Mr Thomas took her up in her wheeled chair. At the steepest part, they hired a native boy to do the pushing. Ruth saw it from Port Beaufort. Mr Barnes, Uncle Norman's man at Saltpansdrift, has gone to Port Elizabeth for an operation and Aunt Jessie invited us to go to her for a change. My doctor does not advise it until I have undergone a further treatment and prefers my going to the coast. They are getting the medicine from Port Elizabeth for me. Uncle Norman and Gladys and George and Hilda were here yesterday offering to take us out. I went up town by taxi yesterday morning as far as Aunt Eliza's. Joyce and Raymond went with me paying accounts. I was tired with the walking when I got home and did not go out again that day. Dr wants me to take some exercise daily but I must do it slowly. Grace has put off her visit for the present and Dot says they might come to East London about the end of the month if we are there. We shall see.

I was sorry to see that Rev. G P Fergusson, who we knew so well at Vryburg, had been gored by a bull on his son-in-law's farm. Rev Barnes, who was here, has had another nervous breakdown at Port Alfred like he had here after his six months' furlough.

Dot suggests that the family arrange to meet at Kroonstad for Xmas, that we hire bungalows near Grace, on the river. We cannot say at this stage if we could be there but the idea appeals to me considerably. What about it all of you?

Later. No letters from any of you today, owing to Monday last being a holiday. We are anxious to hear how Merle is and if Roy has developed measles.

Mr Cursons is to be buried on Thursday afternoon. Perhaps I shall not attend. I went up town this morning and have not suffered any ill effects except feeling tired. Doctor wants me to take moderate exercise.

Uncle Jack and Aunt Agnes celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary yesterday and incidentally it was Enid's birthday as well. Kingsley has a birthday on 12<sup>th</sup>. I have written a small letter to him care of Potgietersrus. There are quite a number of events to remember this month.

Hope to hear from most of you tomorrow. Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Let my first words be many thanks to all of you for your letter and telegrams on the occasion of our 49<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. We spent a very quiet day, did not invite anyone in but quite a number of friends seemed to know. Aunt Eliza and Joyce came along in the afternoon.

I am tired of writing about myself but no doubt you want to know how I am getting on. All I can say it is slow work. I get up to breakfast most days but do not go out beyond the garden. Doctor does not want me to go to any meetings or committees so I feel out of what is going on. I find I must give up taking the Star as it takes up too much of my time reading it and we get the bulk of the news over the wireless at 8.15 a.m., 1.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. I still have lots of things I want to do so I hope by this means to get some of the jobs done. Doctor has changed my medicine and I am to take a special sort of tablet after every meal for an indefinite period. They only cost 22/- a bottle and a bottle will only last about a month. Then he has prescribed another sort of one of which I am to put under my tongue whenever I feel a pain at the heart. He has not said when we should go to East London. We have heard of a very nice place at £2.50 each per week if we go soon. After the end of the month, the same accommodation will be £3.10 per week so I must find out from Doctor what he thinks about it. Yesterday was a dreadful day. When I rose I felt so much better that I thought I could do almost anything but later a strong wind and dust and heat came up which completely flattened me out for the rest of the day. Today it is the opposite, owing to 15 points of rain having fallen in the night. Later. Letters just to hand from Grace, Denis and others. Pam has been in doctor's hands. Nasal trouble apparently but she thinks she will soon be over it. Doctor says it might lead to further trouble if not seen to.

My doctor is coming tomorrow and shall know then most likely about going to East London. Hope Dot will be able to come to us there as Reg is needing a change as he has been off work for over a week.

Joe wrote that Roy and Trevor, they think, are sickening for measles. Merle is getting on alright we hope.

The grass seed we planted for our lawn is showing up nicely but it will be a month or more before it will be much to look at. All our tanks are about half full of rainwater so we are not short.

Olive took us for a spin as far as Hales Owen one afternoon and I fear I caught a slight cold. I had had thermugen on my chest but doctor said it was not necessary and I fear I took a chill but am feeling better now.

Grace says it will be alright if the family want to meet at Kroonstad for Xmas but the bungalow should be booked as soon as possible. Will those of you who would like the idea communicate direct with Grace.

I feel that this is not worth sending but do not like missing a post. I will keep you informed of our movements by postcards or wire if necessary. Nothing from Potgietersrus today.

Lots of love to all  
Dad

Tenby Private Hotel, East London, C.P.  
As Wednesday October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Well here we are, safe and sound. I think I have already told you by postcard that Doctor came to see me last Thursday and after an examination of blood pressure – still in the neighbourhood of 140 – and taking my pulse, he decided that it would be safe for us to leave as soon as possible for here. He urges us to spend a month if we can. We shall see how we get on before deciding anything further. We lost no time in getting ready. Quite a number of friends came on Thursday to see us, including a call from Alice Biggs and her two daughters who had come over to see Alan off to the front. He left for Pretoria the same evening. Cedric Loscombe, his wife and sister, Dulcie Morecroft, Joyce, Mr Stock and others came. Our train left about ten p.m. on Friday. We found it rather cramped in a coupe with all our luggage but had a fairly good night's sleep, arriving here without incident just at lunch time. We have a very nice large room on the first floor measuring about 18 by 24 feet and a large double window overlooking the sea. It is comfortably furnished, a large wardrobe, dressing table, "tallboy", divan, two tables, two easy chairs, two electric lights, fireplace, rugs etc. Bathroom and lav are on the same floor and there is a small balcony just alongside our room. There are 20 stairs to climb every time but they are very easy ones. Another room is close by which we have provisionally booked for Dot if she decides to come down. We are just on top of Currie Street and there is a bus stop and post box close by. Methodist church and post and telegraph office in the same street besides a number of shops. Rest seats are also available without having to go down to the beach. Doctor told me on no account to walk up from the beach but I could walk down. Busses pass the corner frequently and it is nice and quiet here. The table is good and there seems to be nice people staying here. There is a nice lounge downstairs where morning and afternoon tea is served. The wireless set is also in the lounge. The charges here do not seem excessive £2 5s per week (say 6/- a day each).

We were very tired when we arrived and after lunch, slept till nearly five. We went to church on Sunday morning and in the evening listened into Commemoration church where young Rev Stevenson preached. I wonder if Rex was there. We have not met anyone we know yet but no doubt we soon shall. I am forgetting, Sister Edith came along on Sunday afternoon and her cousin took us to her sister's house for morning tea on Monday. The latter has decided to take over the King George Private Hotel here from November 1<sup>st</sup>. She was trying to buy the Premier in Cradock but her father considered the price was too high.

The foregoing I have written on Tuesday. Nothing has come from Dot so we do not know when to expect her. The postal arrangements do not seem to be very good. Post that arrives here by train at lunch time is not delivered until about ten the next morning. The outward post closes early in the morning so we shall post over night. Let us know when you receive letters.

We have had a letter from Joe and Blodwen. All three children have got measles. We are surprised that Merle had gone back to school.

We are sleeping better and certainly are feeling much better. We weighed ourselves and Mom is 170. I am only 157 pounds. Wednesday morning. Ernest's Dorothy and husband, Bill Murray, have just been in to see us. They are on holiday by motor and visiting his people who reside here. They leave for Cradock on Saturday for a few days. Joe writes that Douglas was in Bloemfontein buying a drilling machine recently. We are wondering if they will be coming here.

Later. The post was only delivered after 12. Nothing from Dot so we do not yet know when to expect her, but no doubt we shall hear all in good time. Grace write that she has servant troubles again but old Jane is a very faithful standby. Perhaps she may bring Pam down to see Dr Pollock about her nose which has been giving trouble lately. David also wrote a very nice letter. Says he can drive the car now. Joe writes enquiring how we are getting on.

I see I am at the end of the sheet so must stop.

Lots of love, Dad



Tenby Private Hotel, East London  
as Wednesday October 30<sup>th</sup> 1940

My dear All,

I have had my typewriter overhauled since I came down and I hope it will give better results. I shall be glad if it will spell better I shall be glad. I have also got new carbon paper as the old lot was getting very worn. I have had a new sign added, an exclamation mark \* but it seems to me a star. I understand they use this in America. So when you see it you will know what is intended.

So far we have not seen a fly or heard a mosquito for which much thanks.

A paragraph appeared in the local paper announcing our arrival a few days ago. This brought a phone message from Mrs Halse, (formerly of Vryburg) asking us to morning tea on Friday. It was a great pleasure to see her again and her daughter Molly. She has two daughters, one is very delicate but seems to be improving by living at the coast. We are to go there again when Dot comes.

This morning (Monday) we received a wire from Ted saying that Grace and baby were coming with Dot so we are expecting them on Thursday afternoon. What a pleasure this will be. Of course we have never seen baby Charles Frank. We have arranged for all of them to stay here. Sister Edith came with us to church on Sunday morning and this morning her cousin, Mrs Pitt, took us for a spin to town and the beach. She has taken over the King George Private Hotel from November the first. We should like to have stayed there but it is so far from the sea front. However we shall see. if we have to stay longer. We have suggested to Grace and Dot that they arrange their tickets so that they can return to Cradock with us. Late Thursday, I think it was, we had an unexpected call from Dorothy Murray and her husband. They have now gone to Cradock and then on to Graaff Reinet and back to Cape Town. Bill is expecting to be called up for service any time now. Mr Ibbs also called and is coming again. Sunday afternoon, Una and John Shingler called in their car and we all went to the beach. Mr and Mrs Florence were with them. Mr Shingler is volunteering for Toc H service and if rejected, will go on active service. They are trying to let their house and Una will go and live with her parents at Fish Hoek and may go teaching again. Their little boy was four years old yesterday. He is a fine little fellow. They are looking forward to seeing Dot. They did not know that Grace was also coming. Mr Schroder also called in the afternoon on Sunday when we were out. The Sowdens were with him. They will come again. We have retired early each evening since we have been here except one evening when we went to hear a native choir in the Town Hall. We did not stay to the end.

I got so far on Monday. It is now Tuesday afternoon. Whilst at lunch, we received a wire from Dot saying she could not leave at once so we wired to Grace hoping she would still come. We have not had a reply yet. It was very misty during the night and the fog horn was going for a long time. We stayed in all the morning but have been down to the sea this afternoon. Of course doctor said I was not to think of bathing, even in the enclosed baths on any account. I had a miserable night last night and the cough was very troublesome. I weighed about a pound more than last week. Later. At six this evening we received another wire from Ted saying that Grace is leaving tomorrow so she will be here on Thursday afternoon. No doubt we shall hear from Dot in due course as to when to expect her. We had a letter from Joyce today saying Dundas street was still in the same place and all was well. She is looking to go to Cape Town in December as Muriel and her children are going from Maritzburg. A Mr Jones who used to work at SAR Salt River with Joe is staying here and introduced himself to me. He has been transferred to the works here and likes it very much better than Cape Town.

We shall stay here for the present for the month as Dot says she will return with us to Cradock. I do not think I must add more as I find the paper is about finished and the news also. So goodbye for the present.

Lots of love to all from  
Dad

47 Inverleigh Terrace, East London  
Wednesday November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

We are still here but not in the same house. On Thursday afternoon, we met Grace and baby Charles for the first time (so far as baby is concerned). They had had a hot journey from Kroonstad and were, of course, disappointed that Dot had not been able to come by the same train. We had made arrangements for both to stay at the same hotel but they gave us to understand that they were not keen on having children but showed us a room with a cot etc. On Monday, the proprietress informed us that some of the boarders complained of the noise baby made, as though a child could be expected to be quiet. They had no garden where he could play but they suggested that a nurse girl should be engaged by the day to look after him. Grace has never had a nurse girl for him so that would not be likely to work. So they suggested that Grace should find another place. So I made arrangements to come here, which is in the same street and was recommended by others. I told the people that if Grace left, we should do the same as she was here for our benefit. They did not like our going as well but as I had informed them when we arrived that I took the room for a fortnight certain with an option of staying longer if I wanted to, they could not object. The rooms we have here are not so large but are on the ground floor so I avoid the flight of 20 stairs which were somewhat trying. We have a Post Office next door but one to us and the Methodist Church is exactly opposite. Mrs Halse and daughter are in the same street and we expect Mrs Hudson Senior will stay at her former place which is also close by. We have not such a good view of the sea but are quite as near as we were before. So that's that.

We are very glad to have Grace's company to say nothing of baby Charles. He is a fine sturdy boy, but of course being away from home and all the attention of his big brothers and sisters and being amongst strangers, it would be unreasonable to expect him to be the same as when under normal conditions. We are very pleased and proud of him. He is very jealous of letting his mother go out of his sight but Mom has taken charge of him on several occasions. For instance, yesterday morning Grace and I went to town whilst baby was asleep and Mom took charge of him. On Sunday evening, Mom and I went to service whilst Gay got him to sleep. Then she came to service in time for the collection and sermon. And what a sermon it was. They are very fortunate in having such a capable young man in charge here. He is indeed a live wire. You have to get there early if you want to get a seat. Both sides of the aisle, extra chairs have to be brought in each Sunday. It was their church anniversary and the minister was in the vestry all Monday receiving the free will gifts of the congregation, the amount raised being over £75. Some months ago when we were here before, we attended the opening of their new organ. There is a beautiful painting of lilies in the organ recess which was done by Mrs Stevenson, wife of the Minister at Seapoint, whom we knew so well when we were at Observatory. (I see I have made a mistake, it was Observatory, not Sea Point, where they were stationed.) Mrs Stephenson died very suddenly a few months ago.

The hurried packing up and moving on Monday did not do me any good and yesterday I was feeling 'done in' but am better today. In order to satisfy all concerned, I am going to be overhauled this morning by a local doctor to see if the change is doing me the desired good. Monday evening we spent a very nice evening with old friends of Vryburg days, the Schroder family. We took baby asleep with us and he does not seem to have suffered any harm. Of course we went and returned by car. We have seen a good deal of the Florences. Una's parents are here and Una is going to live with them at Fish Hoek whilst her husband goes to the front as Warden is one of Toc H huts. He is to report for duty on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Una says she may take up teaching again. You will be sorry to hear that Mrs Rickett is very ill at Alice. She was going to stay with George and Hilda Collett at Groenkloof but was too ill to get there. All her family has been down from Rhodesia to see her.

We have had fine weather for the most part, a little rain once or twice but not enough to inconvenience us. There has been a good deal of wind too.

Later. Dot writes that she cannot say definitely if she will be able to come down, one of the children seems to be sickening for something, but she may come direct to Cradock. However I am wiring her in the morning to find out her plans. Grace thinks she should be getting back about Monday. We may spend a week with Sister Edith and her cousin who have taken over the King George Private Hotel in St George's Street. Please post to us at the address on page one.

We had tea on the esplanade this afternoon with Una and her parents. They look to return to Fish Hoek about end of the month. It has been suggested that her brother, Jim, might apply for the headmastership of the Boys' High School in Cradock as there is to be a change there shortly.

Evening. I know you will be anxious to hear the result of the examination by doctor this morning. He carefully examined my heart and confirmed Dr Scholtz' opinion that the muscles are getting hardened. He says I might go a round of visits but why take risks? He compared the position with that of a motorcar's engine. It could do certain hills in top gear but why tax its strength and overstrain the engine etc. He would not advise such a journey, especially as the family can come here to see us. He was surprised at the condition of my heart considering my age and he hopes his own will be as good when he is my age. He has come to East London for the same reason as his heart is not too strong. He strongly advises me to give up outside work and rest as much as possible. He has no doubts as to my heart working better here if we decided to leave Cradock. He thinks that one of the suburbs – Vincent, Cambridge, Selborne etc. would be better than so near the sea as we are here. He was surprised when I told him I had had rheumatic fever, and pneumonia in Cradock. Mom was with me at the interview and considered his advice very sound and practical. I cannot give all he said but have told you enough to think about. Needless to say it has given us food for thought. One idea has at once suggested itself that Mrs Rickett's house at Vincent might be useful for a few months.

It is getting late so must close but before doing so, must say that Douglas is thinking of coming down before long but does not know if he would come as far as this. Will keep you posted but shall be glad to have your views as soon as possible.

Many thanks for all letter received recently, and hoping that all in each home are well and happy, yours with much love

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Thursday November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Here we are back again in Cradock. It seemed impossible to make plans that would be suitable to all concerned so I thought it best to return. Grace did not feel that she could stay much longer and Dot was not able to come as soon as she expected. We tried to arrange for her to meet us here and for her to go on to East London to be with Mrs Hudson after staying some time here. Everyone advised us to stay longer in East London but way did not seem to open in that direction, not that I was tired of the place, far from that being so. The accommodation was not too comfortable though the people were very kind and nice. They did not object to baby being at the table with us etc. It would have meant another packing and unpacking which was rather a trial of strength last time. I think the change has done me some good, at any rate I hope so. I weighed myself a few times and found I was lighter than I have been for years, 157 lbs. Mom was 170. We had a variety of weather some days quite overcast and drizzling, some cold and wearing overcoat. Others were quite hot. Only twice did I venture to put on a light suit. Some days we did not go down to the beach at all. We did not go anywhere in the way of sightseeing except on two occasions when John Shingler and Mr Schroder each took us for a spin in their cars. We did not get so far as Rockcliff cottages where we had such a jolly holiday now nearly two years ago. I think it will be another year or so before the remains are completely destroyed. Schroder took us through a good many of the suburbs of East London and there are many pretty spots.

Mrs Hudson came to see us and we went to see her. She is staying at the Athenaeum Private Hotel which is rather far up Oxford Street. Mom and I had dinner one evening at Cathie and Edith's hotel, the King George Private Hotel. We did not think of spending a week there but another time – if there is such – we may go there as it certainly looks a very comfortable place. Mr and Mrs Florence are returning to Fish Hoek at the end of the month and Una goes with them. They have let their house. We were sorry to hear that Mrs Rickett is so ill at Alice and is not expected to last long. We did not see anything of the girls.

Since typing the above, Dr Scholtz has been to examine me. He says there is a decided improvement and is still of the same opinion that I should be much better at the coast. However here we are for the present. He favours the Berea area. The East London doctor advised my giving up all outside work but Dr Scholtz says he thinks that would be a mistake. I should keep on with some Council work.

A wire from Dot has been returned to us from the boarding house as it came after we had left. She says she would stay three weeks with us at East London or if we return to Cradock, she will come a month or so later. Grace is looking to leave for Bloemfontein on Saturday night and spend the day with Joe and Blodwen. It has been very nice having her with us and I hope the change has done her good. As to baby Charles, he has won everybody's hearts. Of course being the youngest, he gets a great deal of attention from his mother. He does not want to have much to do with anyone else but as he gets used to us more, he will be more friendly. He is very fond of the garden. Grace brought a folding pram for him which is just as well as he weighs 28 pounds and is 16 months old. Aunt Eliza and Joyce came to see us yesterday afternoon. Auntie is charmed with him and would like to see him and Blodwen's baby together – so would we.

The garden is looking nice and green as rain has fallen recently. Our tanks are nearly full so we shall have plenty for the summer.

I do not think I must add more as I must rest as much as possible. It is very hot today. Joe reports having had a very heavy storm, the water flooding into his garage, fortunately not into the house.

Much love to each and all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Wednesday November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

The news this week is that Grace has returned to Kroonstad and Dot will come to us. We were pleased to have Grace so long with us. She decided to return by the fast train on Saturday night but unfortunately the train was an hour late in starting. It was thought undesirable for me to see her off so Ernest kindly undertook that duty. We all went to bed about ten and set the alarm so as to be ready in time for 11.30. Baby was fast asleep of course and Grace had had some rest. It was a scramble to get off but managed to catch the train all right. Grace had to occupy the top bunk but was fairly comfortable. She phoned after her arrival home and we were glad to know that she was safe, especially as we heard over the wireless that a goods train had been derailed in the Free State and the train from the north was five hours late. We feared her train might also have been affected but it was not. Joe and Blodwen and the children saw them at Bloemfontein station for a few minutes and were able to compare the two babies who are only two weeks different in age. Grace's baby is the taller of the two and Blodwen's is heavier so we understand. No doubt there was a great reception when they got home and we were glad to hear Ted's voice on the phone as well. Dot had wired that she was leaving on Sunday for Johannesburg and would arrive on Tuesday morning. She had a few minutes at Kroonstad to see Grace and family but did not let Joe and Blodwen know of her passing as the train touches at Bloemfontein late at night. No doubt she will see them on her return trip. The train was up to time 9.30 a.m. so I walked to the station and we came home by taxi. Dot is very thin but otherwise seems well. We hope she will be able to stay some weeks. We are sorry to learn from her that Reg is far from well and needs a change. We hope everything goes well whilst she is away. Aunt Eliza, Joyce and Raymond came down in the afternoon and Mary and Olive in the evening. Uncle Norman was here to dinner and it has been suggested that we three go out to stay with Aunt Jessie who is quite alone as Mr Barnes is in hospital in Port Elizabeth. Nothing is decided at present. Joe and Blodwen write asking us to make enquiries re accommodation near us for Xmas as they are thinking of coming to us for the week. We hope they will. Uncle Norman has wired for his three boys to come back from camp so as to help with the reaping. They are expecting a heavy crop. They have just finished shearing.

I attended one Council committee meeting on Monday and am afraid it did not do me any good. If I find that I cannot do full justice to Council work, I shall probably resign as I never believe in half doing things. Arrangements have been made to relieve me of the Superintendency of the Sunday School up to the end of the year at any rate. The heat has been very trying this week. Yesterday it reached 97 in the shade. It has been over 90 all the week. It takes it out of me terribly. I am thankful our house is very cool.

Olive came along on Sunday afternoon and took us as far as Hales Owen which was very kind of her. Uncle Walter seemed to enjoy the outing. We did not go to church in the morning as I was not feeling too grand but we went in the evening.

Since we have been back, I have not subscribed to any newspaper (except the Midland News of course) and depend pretty much on the wireless for keeping us posted in what is happening in the outside world. I miss getting the daily paper at East London, which was delivered under my bedroom door about five every morning, and so gave the opportunity of reading it in bed. I seem to get no time for reading now. I spend a good deal of time resting which in a way seems a waste of time as there is so much I want to do.

I have only had one shave since I returned and feel very dirty about the chin. I wish I could go without shaving but whenever I have tried, I cut myself dreadfully as I can't see properly.

It has been very nice having Grace with us and now Dot is here, it is also nice. What we shall do when it comes to parting with her, I do not like to contemplate, but must live a day at a time.

Lots of love to all and hoping to hear from all of you soon. Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Wednesday November 27<sup>th</sup> 1940

My dear All,

We still have Dot with us I am glad to say and hope she will be able to stay some time longer. We are indeed grateful to Reg and her two boys for allowing her to come. We are hoping it may be possible for her to get a lift as far as East London to see Mrs Hudson Senior. It would also be nice if Reg could bring the boys down before she returns but we must wait and see. We are glad also to know that Joe and family are arranging to come for a week at Xmas. They suggested staying at the Premier but as that is rather expensive, we have been able to make arrangements with our opposite neighbour, who is going away for Xmas, to occupy some of their rooms. This will save expense and being just opposite, will be very convenient. Douglas has suggested that Rex should spend a week here on his way home from school next week. We have tried before to arrange this but without success. As he will be leaving Kingswood this term, it may be some time before he is passing this way again so we hope it will materialise. Douglas will have the pleasure of having all his family together for Xmas. We do not know if Reg and family will go to Kroonstad. In less than a month, Xmas will be behind us. How lovely it would be if peace could be arranged before then. Instead, it looks as though more countries are joining in the fray, Belgium having declared war on Italy.

We were very sorry to hear that Mrs Geard passed away suddenly in Vryburg just prior to going on holiday. Sydney called here whilst we were at East London and left his card and since then, he has written giving particulars. Our two families were very closely united. He is now Manager of the bank in Adelaide.

Another very old friend of ours has also passed on. Rev Douglas who was Methodist Minister here when I first came to Cradock. We named our Douglas after him. He would have been 87 next January. He died of cancer in the tongue in Middelburg Hospital. And so one and another of our old friends are passing away. Who will be next?

We have experienced a variety of changes in the weather lately. It was 98 in the shade yesterday and the minimum for the 24 hours previously was 65. The wind has also been most trying, so much so that for some days I have not been out of the house except in the garden. I weighed myself recently and found I had dropped to 150 but I think the weighing machine must be out of order as I was 160 when I left East London. I shall try again.

For the next day or two I shall be busy addressing my Xmas cards. I am sorry that I am late with posting the overseas ones but hope they will get to their destination in due course. The South African ones will be posted later. I shall not have the job of sending out the 300 "official" ones as I have done the last three years.

Aunt Eliza thinks I ought to have a wheeled chair like hers and let our old store boy, Damon, wheel me about town. I am thankful to say that I have not reached that stage yet and hope it never will be necessary.

Letters from different homes this morning are all very interesting. Denis has broken all records in his history examination paper for the second year B.A. exam. Douglas may be coming down but we do not expect it will be before Xmas. We shall be glad to see him. Reg tells an amusing story of his bread-making experience whilst Dot was away. It was a success in the end. Grace says baby is cutting more teeth and has caught cold after his first venture in their paddling pool. Grace thinks they will all spend Xmas at home. We are looking forward to Joe and family coming down. Do not know if they will bring their car. Today is nice and cool and is more "liveable". Have been up town with Mom but get very tired. I have not been as far as Aunt Eliza's house since we returned from East London. Joyce looks to return to Cape Town about December 10<sup>th</sup> for a month.

Dot has started reading the book "Grey Steel" the life of General Smuts – it is most interesting. You should all read it.

I must close now, with much love to each and all.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Dorothy is still with us and hope she will be able to stay some time yet. She is a great comfort and help. We wish she was fatter but for all that, she seems very well. She keeps busy all day and in addition has been reading Grey Steel, the life of General Smuts aloud to us – and knitting whilst reading. I inserted an advertisement to see if we could get a lift in a car to East London so that she could see Mrs Hudson Senior but so far without success. The taxi will take us for four days stay there for £9. Rev Mr Weavers has offered to take all of us to Fish River on Saturday as he is going out for service on the Sunday. We shall probably accept the offer.

The event of the week has been the visit of the mobile column to Cradock. They arrived about noon on Monday and spent the day and night in town. It was a very hot day and I was glad that I was not Mayor to give them the official welcome. They appear to be a very fine body of men – all South Africans. They gave a military display in the afternoon – which I did not attend – but the “retreat” drill was a perfect display of accurate drilling. The weather was fine, not too hot, and the attendance of visitors from the district as well as townsfolk was all that could be desired. Even many of those who are opposed to the war policy of the Government were interested spectators. Mom and I went to the official dinner in the evening and came away as soon as possible.

We had a fair share of visitors during the day. Aunt Jessie was very interested in all the performances. The band which accompanies the column added considerably to the success of the day. The three aeroplanes which accompany the column did many stunts. They left early the following morning for Middelburg and Colesberg. The Chief Officer, Werdmuller, was in the bank with Harold at Vryburg and remembered us very well. He met Ruth in Grahamstown some time ago. We had a nice shower – 22 points of rain yesterday afternoon but fear it was not welcomed by many of the farmers who are busy reaping their wheat crop. It is a nice addition to our storage tanks.

We are sorry that Rex will not be able to break his journey here on Friday night on his way from school but he says he may have to return for another term to pass some examination. Douglas still talks of coming to see us but I doubt if he will be able to manage it before Xmas. Needless to say he is welcome any time. Joe and family are still looking to come for Xmas week but so far we have not made any definite booking of accommodation. The party who offered us a room has now found she cannot do so. Am trying to make other plans.

Unfortunately our maidservant has had to leave for domestic reasons and expects to be away for two months. She has put a young girl in her place but so far she does not look as though she will be of much use. She came after nine a.m. the first morning but was earlier this morning. Dorothy is helping out in the meantime. Joe wants to have the car overhauled but perhaps they will come by train. We shall most likely arrange to have meals out so as to save cooking at home.

Grace writes that her two girls may be going to relations near Cape Town for part of the holidays and she is trying to arrange for the two boys to go to one of Ted's brothers in Natal. If this does not materialise they may come here. Dot is expecting to meet her boys at Grace's about 18<sup>th</sup> so all the different families are likely to be scattered. I do not know that I have much to report about myself. I am still losing eight. I am now only 154½. I am sleeping better as a rule but soon get tired. Olive very kindly took us to Lake Arthur recently. Uncle Walter had never been there before. It was a nice little run and we had Joyce and Raymond with us. Raymond is very fond of our swing when he comes here, as they often do. Aunt Eliza is keeping very well and often comes down to see us. I wish her hearing was better. She has been suffering some pain in her damaged arm lately. Of course she has never been able to use it properly since it was broken but it is wonderful how she does manage. Joyce will be going to Cape Town some time next week I think. Aunt Emmie and all the others are looking to spend Xmas at Gordons Bay where they were a few years ago. Much love to all, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Wednesday December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Two weeks today and we shall be celebrating Christmas. There is no peace in the world and the armies are not to have any rest on that day. In fact, history records that many frightful battles have been fought on Xmas day. Personally I think that 1941 will decide the war issue. Then peace terms will be almost as difficult to arrive at as war has been. However, we must hope for the best.

Dot left us on Monday night for East London to see Mrs Hudson for a few days. She looks to be back on Saturday morning. We miss her very much. It has been a great help having had her and Grace with us during the past few weeks. We wish it were possible for us to be nearer to our loved ones. Perhaps something may happen in this direction if Reg could get something to do here.

We saw Rex on Friday night as he passed on his way home from school. He says he may have to come back next quarter to pass in one subject in his matric exam which he thinks he failed in. Saturday morning we were at the station again to see Denis pass on his way to the officers' training camp for ten days training. He looks to be back for Xmas. Both of them were looking very fit.

Last Saturday, Ernest's son, Guy, was married in Johannesburg. Alison went up for the event. They will break their honeymoon in Cradock on their way back. Guy is in the army and his wife is carrying on her job as radiologist in Johannesburg. What a number of war weddings there have been to be sure. I hope they all turn out a success.

The weather has been too dreadful the last few days. Yesterday was the hottest for this season so far – 102 in the shade and 60 the lowest during the night. It takes the strength out of me. Aunt Eliza wants me to have a wheel chair like hers so that I can be pushed all over the town. I hope I shall never come to that but should I lose the power to walk, I suppose I should be glad of such. I am thankful that I can do as much walking as I do. This morning I went to see Uncle Walter before breakfast and after breakfast was up town and went as far as Aunt Eliza. Of course I have to walk very slowly. I get very hot and tired.

Congratulations to Grace and Ted on their 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their wedding day. May they see many more. Grace says perhaps her girls will go to Cape Town for part of the holidays and the two boys may come to us. They will bring their bikes if they do so that they can get into the country.

I have been invited to attend some Friends meetings in Port Elizabeth on January 18<sup>th</sup> and we have wondered if it would be worthwhile taking advantage of the excursion fares which are available for issue up to January 3<sup>rd</sup> and spend the time at the coast until the meetings are over. Have written to Port Elizabeth to see if any accommodation would be available.

We have been enjoying some figs out of our garden the last few days but the birds are having the best of them. Our grapes are coming on but will not be ripe for a month or more. We hear from our relations in London that one bomb dropped in an open piece of ground near them and as a result of the one explosion, eight hundred houses were more or less damaged. Strange to say there was not a single casualty. They always sleep in their clothes, ready for any emergency. I don't think I told you that Olive recently took us for a spin to see Lake Arthur, about 18 miles from town. Uncle Walter had never seen it before. It was a very hot afternoon so did not stay long. Dot was with us. We weighed at the station recently. Mom is still 170, Dot 108 and I was 154½. If this weather lasts much longer, I shall be reduced to a grease spot.

Our friends, Mr and Mrs Stock, have just returned from a month's holiday at Port Elizabeth. They stayed at one of the best hotels, had two rooms, bedroom and sitting room, next to each other and a private balcony for £12.10 each per month. He says they cannot live cheaper than that at home. Of course that included hot and cold bathroom, meals etc. It sounds very reasonable and some thing of the sort might suit us some day.

Again I wish you all everything of the best for the coming season. Dad



34 Dundas Street, Box 141, Cradock  
Wednesday December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

Dot returned from East London on Saturday morning, having enjoyed her short visit. She took Mrs Hudson quite by surprise and I am glad she had the change though it was far too short. Now she has left us and as I write this, I suppose she is in the train from Bloemfontein on her way to Grace at Kroonstad. The plan is for her to meet Reg and the two boys there on Sunday and spend Christmas together. Needless to say we miss her very much – she was with us practically for four weeks. Both she and Grace feel that the time has come when Mom and I should have someone to look after us. There are a number of things I am not supposed to do – stooping, getting on a ladder, walking quickly, going up and down stairs etc. etc. etc. My diet is also a little trouble I fear. I have discontinued taking porridge, soup, meat, toast, tea etc. and have to have dry meals and take medicine directly after meals and again at night and also carry an emergency bottle of pills in case of a sudden attack. All these and other things cause extra work. The difficulty is of finding a suitable person who could and would be congenial in the home.

We do not know when Douglas will be coming down but we shall be pleased to see him and any from that part. Joe and family are due to arrive on Sunday morning and are leaving again on Thursday night. They come by train and when they get back to Bloemfontein, they leave the next day for a motor trip to the Basutoland border. He has had my old car overhauled – new pistons put in etc. Grace may be letting the two boys come to us after the New Year but we have not heard definitely yet. Their two girls are going to friends-relations of Ted's – at Belville near Cape Town. Aunt Emmie, Muriel and Joyce are spending a fortnight at Gordons Bay. Joyce looks to come back to Aunt Eliza in January. Dot saw Norma Rickett as she passed through Alice on her way back from East London. She says Ruth had a lift to Alice recently and saw Mrs Rickett. She is going back to East London when she is well enough to travel.

Mr Metcalf is still very ill. Some days he is a little better. All his family are here. Mary is still nursing there. He complains of the heat being so trying. Fourteen days this month the temperature has been over 90 degrees in the shade, three times over 100. It is very trying for everyone. It takes it out of me a lot. Fortunately our house is beautifully cool. Some days I do not go out at all.

We have had one boiling of green mealies from our garden so far. They were very small. Our first crop of figs are finished. Grapes seem to be plentiful but are not ripe yet.

I have been spending a good deal of time destroying hundreds of newspaper cuttings lately. I had kept copies of reports of Council meetings and other functions I had attended during the past three years. Now they are gone in the wastepaper basket. I was sorry to part with them as many were of historic value. I am now tackling the crowd of photographs. This will keep me busy for some time to come.

Our garden boy has gone to Graaff Reinet and will not be back before the first week in January. He has put his little son in his place for the time. Our maid visited us this morning. Her substitute is doing her best but of course is not up to the work as well as the old one.

As I am writing – 2.25 p.m., a dry thunder storm is passing over us. Hope it will rain. Xmas cards are beginning to arrive. Have posted all ours.

This day next week is Christmas Day. The world seems out of joint but for all that, I hope all of you in your different homes will have as happy time as possible. Needless to say we shall be thinking of all of you and hope to hear how you have spent the day in due course.

Much love and good wishes to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock. Box 141  
Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1940

My dear All,

It is Wednesday afternoon, we, that is Mom, Joe, Blodwen and the three children, are with us. We all had dinner at Mrs Derecourt's, and such a dinner. Soup (which I do not touch), turkey, fowl, vegetables, Christmas pudding, jelly and fruit. If that was not enough, I don't know what room there was left for anything more. Well, I think I must go back a bit. We were glad to get news from Dot that she arrived safely at Bloemfontein and spent the night with Joe and Blodwen. She found it terribly hot travelling that day when we had it over 100 in the shade. It was pretty hot the next day going on to Kroonstad. We were very glad to get a wire from Reg on Tuesday afternoon saying he and the boys had duly arrived. Their family was thus complete but Grace was minus her two girls who had gone to Belville, Cape Town with some of Ted's relations. Douglas wrote that he expected to have all his family at home which was no doubt the case. Ruth and Denis were going to spend a few days on Mr Mackenzie's farm near Grahamstown and so no doubt we shall hear in due time how each circle celebrated the day.

Mom and I went to early service (7.30) and home to breakfast and Joe and family came over afterwards. I am afraid that I am somewhat mixed in that I have not so far reported the safe arrival of Joe and Co on Sunday morning. They were due at 9.20 but the train was 2½ hours late. I was at a meeting at Ernest's at the time. We had fixed up accommodation for all of them at a boarding house nearby, in the house where Aunt Emmie used to live many years ago. They have two rooms there and have breakfast and dinner there. They all come over to us for morning and afternoon tea and supper except when they are asked out. Mom and I go over there to dinner except on one day Mom was not feeling well so we sent over for our dinners and had it quietly at home. The weather has been very hot but the nights have been cool.

Thursday morning, Boxing Day. Last evening Mr Thomas brought Aunt Eliza down in her chair and we sat under the vine trellis until about nine when we were joined by Mary for a short time. Then we came inside and had some music and then Joe and the children entertained us with some gymnastic items. Aunt Eliza actually got out of her chair and sat in the drawing room until nearly ten. Unfortunately on Tuesday my voice began to leave me and by Wednesday I could only whisper. Consequently with Eliza's deafness, we were not able to converse. My voice does occasionally leave me but it must be a year or more since it happened. It is rather better this morning. Joe and family are leaving by train about eleven tonight and on Saturday they are going to spend a week on a farm near Bethlehem where they have engaged accommodation. The children are growing nicely and have given us some songs and recitations. Roy now moves up into Standard One and Merle into Sub B. Trevor is learning to talk very well. He is full of life.

Grace and Dot have both urged us to make some plan to be relieved of housekeeping duties, so I hope you will be pleased to hear that we have arranged with Mrs Macleod to come to us for three months on trial and she will take over the bulk of the cooking and such other duties as Mom will assign to her. I hope the plan will work. Of course we are paying her. She comes on Saturday.

We have had many Xmas cards – the words of some have been most appropriate. We listened in to the King's Xmas message and it came over very clearly. We are looking forward to a visit from Douglas and hope that Evelyn and some of the family will also be able to come.

Our regular maid left on December 1<sup>st</sup> and has had a baby since. The girl she has sent in her place is far from satisfactory so we shall have to start with a new one. Our garden boy is also away for two weeks and his substitute is practically useless. These and other things do not add to the general smooth running of the machinery. However we hope they are only passing phases.

I hope this will find each household well after the feast and that before another Xmas comes round, we shall have peace on earth and good will towards all men. May the coming year bring with it peace, happiness and prosperity is the wish of your affectionate Dad.