

Grass Ridge  
Vryburg  
Sunday afternoon, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

A happy New Year to you all. We have just experienced a sharp and very welcome thunderstorm, hence my being indoors and commencing a letter to you. Joe and Blodwen came over in my car on New Years day, having left Bloemfontein at 3.30 am, arriving here ten past 12, distance covered 230 miles in less than eight hours. They left an hour before the storm commenced and we do not think it would catch them. As I write, it is quite clear and the air cool and fresh. It is evident that the storm has been local. They expect to get home about eight tonight. It has been very nice having them here if only for such a short time. Eric, Freda and children came over this morning to see them and us and are still here. They will return later this afternoon. They are all well and it has been nice to see all the younger children playing together on the beautiful wide stoep. Joe and I slept on the veranda, as do also the two elder boys. Lynne has slept for two nights at Frank's farm, about a mile and a half from here. Evelyn is a wonderful provider and manages everything so easily. The stoep is very useful for having the evening meal outside. We also had a picnic lunch there today.

On New Years day we all went over to Scholtzfontein for the afternoon. Joe had some tennis and all had a very happy time. It was very hot but there was plenty of cold drinks. Douglas took over some ice from his refrigerator. Watermelons etc. were very nice. We were surprised to see how the vines and trees have grown since we were there some three or four years ago. In fact the last visit we paid was with Uncle Joe and Grace when we motored over from Kroonstad. What a lot has happened since then. Some of the visitors enjoyed a swim in the reservoir. I had not my costume or I would also have enjoyed it.

Later Eric and Freda left about five, the rain having stopped for the time-being. Douglas was going to take us over to see the Metcalfs but the rain has put that out of the question. We are, however, going into town to church presently and return about nine thirty. Perhaps I will post this by the same opportunity. I have written to Aunt Emmie this afternoon as Eric tells me she has had another heart attack since Xmas. I am glad she is at Glady's. We also hear that Joyce and Dudley are coming to Cradock soon so we are hoping to have them with us for a time. Dot and Reg are also going to spend some time with us on their way to East London to see Reg's parents who have gone there. Dr has told them that Mrs Hudson must not live here anymore. Reg and Dot will go as far as Bloemfontein by train and take my car from there and after visiting us, take it on to East London. If Joe decides to buy the car, Reg and Dot can deliver it to them on their way back.

I have had a lot of cards and letters from friends this Xmas. I shall be busy answering same when I get home.

We are both charmed with this house. I wish I had one like it. The stoep is s16 feet wide round two sides of the house. The children ride their bikes on it and can turn quite easily. I have slept out each night since I have been here. I hope to continue doing so when I get home.

I wonder what the flat will be like when we get back. It will be nice to be home again.

I did not know that we had the English lark in South Africa but the last few mornings I have been charmed to hear its cheerful note as it rises heavenward. Have any of you heard it in your neighbourhoods?

Perhaps Ruth and Denis will be on the same train as us next Tuesday. They spent one night at Joe and Blodwen's on their way to visit Milner at Ladybrand.

Much love to you all

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 17<sup>th</sup> 1937

My Dear All,

I do not think I have written one circle letter since we got back from Vryburg. It has been one continual rush. I must try to retrace my steps as a good deal has happened in one way and another. We had a comfortable trip down, calling at Bloemfontein on the way and saw Joe for about an hour. The train was late and Mom had turned in. We arrived here correct time but no one expected us as Mary thought that we were returning by my car as Joe had it in Bloemfontein. We saw Aunt Jessie and Iris at Fish River station for a moment and they gave us our weekly supply of eggs etc. Uncle Herbert was reported as still very bad. One of our suitcases was missing from the train and only turned up some days after having been sent to Cape Town in error. Matilda, our maid, turned up some time after we arrived and we soon got busy with breakfast and setting the place in order. She had swept out a day or so before we arrived. Everything was as we had left it. The garden seems to have suffered most. The Church quarterly meeting was held the same evening as we arrived. They have appointed Mr Radford in my place so I shall have less to interest me than ever. Way will open. I have been busy handing over papers, books etc.

Thanks for letters and telegram received on my birthday. We did not of course have any party. Dick Upton and his invalid friend happened to drop in that evening and we enjoyed an interesting talk. They are out to escape the English winter. His friend is very asthmatical. They are leaving tomorrow for Hogsback Sanatorium.

We had a nice social farewell to Rev and Mrs Barnes on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> and they were presented with the circuit motorcar as the new minister has his own. He and his family arrived about 10.30 in the night of 11<sup>th</sup>.

We are expecting Reg and Dot to arrive either tomorrow or the next day. They were due to leave Potgietersrus last night by train as far as Bloemfontein and come on from there by my car. We have lent it to them to go to East London to see Reg's parents who are staying there for the present. Mrs Hudson has to live at the coast on account of high blood pressure. Perhaps Joe will buy my car. I shall be sorry to be without it but Mom seems nervous in it so it is no pleasure. We went out on Friday afternoon to see Uncle Herbert. Aunt Jessie was in so Mom went back with her. One of our business men also wanted to see him so he and his wife went in his car. Uncle is getting much weaker. He is able to get up each day and is as interested as ever in all that goes on on the farm. Uncle Jack spends all day there and sees that his wishes are carried out. Uncle says he gets up during the night and takes a little exercise as he cannot sleep well. He has no appetite and nothing seems to agree with him. His voice is also failing. He enjoys sitting on the stoep for a while when it is cool. Personally I think he will last for a quite a while yet. He has such a strong constitution. Unfortunately he has to change his nurse as she has another case. She has been attending him since May last (£4/4/0d per week and all found). He has medicine to alleviate the pain which is getting much worse. It is service there today but I do not suppose he will be able to get to the station.

Aunt Eliza had an evening recently when we were invited. Lexicon was played, about ten were present. We also spent an evening at Mary's for Friends reading. We saw Ruth and Denis as they passed through from the north. Harold would have been 44 yesterday, had he lived.

We are deeply grateful to all of you for all you did for us on our visit and hope you will come and see us as opportunity offers. You all will be very welcome. Am glad to hear Eric has secured the farm he wanted.

Much love to each and all as though names from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

I wonder if all of you suffered on Monday from the excessive heat wave that we had here. My thermometer registered 104 at the back stoep in the afternoon and the night was very oppressive. I sleep outside but that night there was very little sleep. As a matter of interest, I kept on getting up to register the thermometer: at 7.30 it was 90; at 8.00, 88; at 10.00, 85; at midnight, 82; at 1.30 am, 78; at 3.30 am, 75 and at 6 am 72. I wonder how these would compare with English heat. Fortunately we have had a few showers since.

The event of the week has been the arrival of Reg, Dot and the children. They left Potgietersrus on Saturday night and arrived at Bloemfontein on Sunday evening. Grace, Ted and family saw them as they passed through Kroonstad. They were all well then. They spent Monday with Joe and Blodwen and went to the Zoo and other places of interest. They experienced the same heat as we had on Monday. I am glad they were not travelling that day. They left Bloemfontein about 6.30 Tuesday morning and arrived at 6.30 the same evening. The distance was just 300 miles. They took the wrong road after leaving Middelburg and went along the Graaff Reinet road for a few miles. They did not pass Fish River as intended but came in on the Graaff Reinet road. It did not make very much difference except that the road was not so good. We have taken them about a little and on Monday they will go to Fish River and Grass Ridge etc. They want to start for East London on Wednesday as they want to have a fortnight at the sea. They will call back here and take the train home. Reg has to be at work on February 15<sup>th</sup>. We are spending tomorrow evening at Aunt Eliza's.

Today we have got a bath-chair for Uncle Herbert as he is not able to walk very much. We have hired it by the month. Aunt Jessie was in today as usual and says Uncle keeps about the same. They have gone out in the rain this afternoon. The veldt is very dry and we are glad of rain.

We are glad to know that Eric has at last got the farm he wanted and hope he will make a great success of it. We are also pleased to hear that Uncle Owen's daughter, Joyce Tilly, has a son born at Vryburg a few days ago.

I am still answering some of our Xmas letters. I do about six a day. It is nice to have so many friends.

We are so glad to see that Denis has passed first class in his J.C. exam. He now goes as a boarder to Kingswood College and takes two years for his matric exam. We sent him a wire of congratulations. Ernest's Guy has done well in his ordinary first year's work for B.A.

The new minister, Rev Weavers, preached his first sermon on Sunday last and has made a very favourable impression. Norman and Allen have been along to play with their little boy. The elder boy has struck up a friendship with Jeffrey.

Reg and Dot have decided to leave here on Wednesday morning by car for East London and will call back here about February 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> and leave on Friday morning's train and go right through to Potgietersrus arriving there on Sunday evening. It is very nice having them here and we wish they were nearer to us.

I wonder how the new scale of Civil Service salaries will affect Ted or if there is any nearer prospect of his getting a transfer. We are sorry to hear by postcard that Grace was not very well. Hope nothing serious. All children will be back at school by next week, another year's work in front of them. Norman says he is going to school when he gets back.

We are looking forward to a visit from Dudley and Joyce next week. He is to sleep at Mr Metcalf's I understand.

We have not heard if Douglas has had any rain lately. We hope the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the Protectorate will not affect him.

Much love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
January 28<sup>th</sup> 1937

My Dear All,

How the month is flying, nearly one twelfth of the year gone and so little done. It behoves us all to get a move on. Here we have been busy in one way and another getting about with Reg and Dot. On Monday morning we went to Fish River, calling first at Uncle Jack's where we had morning tea with Aunt Agnes, Gladys and Joan (Ernest's). Reg has never been in these parts and was interested in all he saw. We had dinner at Uncle Herbert's. He never comes to table now but has what he wants in his bedroom. He is getting weaker and seldom gets off the stoep. We have hired a bath-chair for him but I doubt if he will use it very much. Reg and Dot and Iris went for a walk all about the farm. It was very hot all day. Uncle recognised Reg, having met him when in Vryburg years ago. No one stays long in his room. I am sending out an electric bell so that he can the easier call Nurse when he wants her.

Our next call was at Uncle Gervase's new farm. He has built a very nice cosy house. The rooms are not large but as the three girls are away at school or are teaching, it will be quite large enough. The plan is novel. Aunt Rouena was the architect. They told us of their experience last Friday. They all came in to attend the bioscope and were at our house but as we were so full, did not stay to tea but went to the cafe. A storm of rain came up so Uncle decided to go straight back instead of staying to bio. They were held up by the sluits between Pauls River and Fish River and could not get backward or forward for some time when they decided to come back to town and go out on the top road via Katkop. This they eventually did and only reached home about three in the morning. The children were thrilled with Uncle as he made Alan a "buck" whip as he calls it. He made one for Norman some time ago when last here. After tea, we went on to Grass Ridge for supper and to sleep. We had of course phoned them previously. Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate are always pleased to have visitors. More walks and inspections of points of interest were taken, all very interesting to us all. We listened in during the evening and played lexicon until after ten. After breakfast we motored up to see the dam which I am sorry to say is far from full. Unless it gets filled before the close of the season, it will be a sorry look out for a good many. I did not feel equal to walking along the dam wall so waited for the return of the others who went to the end. We had seen the Lake Arthur dam on Sunday afternoon and so were able to compare both irrigation schemes. We then went to Uncle Norman's for morning tea and back home just at one o'clock and had a cold lunch.

Tuesday evening I had Council meeting to attend, the first I have been to for some months. Reg and Dot were busy packing so as to be off early Wednesday.

They left at 6.30 am and no doubt we shall hear of their safe arrival at East London in due course. They look to be back again in two weeks time for a day or so before going home. We were sorry to find that Leslie Hudson had called on Monday just after we had left for Fish River. We hope to see him and family as they pass through on their return home.

Joe tells us that one evening when he and Blodwen had gone to the Library and left the children in bed in charge of the servant, Roy had got up and started to follow them. A lady passing him in the street asked him his name and giving him a penny, took him home again. The servant did not know that he had gone out of the house. He might have met with a serious accident.

We wired to Denis on his having passed first class in his junior certificate examination. I am thankful to say the weather has been decidedly cooler the last couple of days. Aunt Eliza is expecting Joyce and Dudley on Saturday night. We hope to see something of them.

Later. Wire from Reg saying they had a good trip. I am sorry I forgot Jean's birthday last week. Nice letter from Una this morning. She hopes to go to Cape Town in March. Baby doing nicely now.

Hope you are all keeping well. Grace does not seem too grand.

Love to all from Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

I want if possible to get my weekly letter off on Wednesdays in future as we generally hear from some of you on that day. It is not always possible to do it but now that I am getting into more regular ways with my correspondence, I shall try to keep it up. I am still sleeping out on the back stoep and generally rise when the six o'clock hooter goes. By 6.30, I am ready for work. I am sorry Mom will not sleep outside. She fears that the noise of the trains will disturb her. I hardly ever notice them now. I did at first. The hooters I always hear. I notice the sun is rising much later now but it is still very hot during the day. I do a good deal of writing before breakfast but when I have answered all my Xmas letters, I am going to take a walk for half an hour or so before breakfast which will enable me to see what is required to be done in the way of "city" improvements. I am on the works committee of the Council so it will be both interesting and helpful. Most of the other members are men in business so have not much time for looking into things. Certainly the early morning is the best time of the day.

Some of my friends have advised me not to read too much as it might be bad for my eyes and overstrain them. I had occasion to write to Dr Stewart recently and so I put the question to him and his reply has come "you may read as much as you wish". This is good news indeed. I have been taking the Eastern Province Herald lately as the Midland is not able to compete with its cable service. The Herald is published in Port Elizabeth about six in the morning and is sent up by motorcar to all the towns as far as Middelburg and is delivered at my door by about ten. It used to be sent by train and was delivered about town either the same evening or the next morning. I do not think it can pay the Publishers but it shows what the competition is like. I do not know that I shall continue it as most of the important news comes over the wireless. The Herald is a good paper but does not come up to either of the Cape Town or Johannesburg ones. It, however, has the latest and also local news of these parts. I am very thankful to be able to read it.

Joyce Townshend and family arrived on Saturday night safe and sound. The latter part of the journey was not very comfortable as the train was overcrowded. Dudley is sleeping at Mr Metcalf's whilst Joyce is of course at Aunt Eliza's. We have seen something of them and are having them to morning tea tomorrow (Mom's birthday). Joyce seems very well and Dudley is not too bright but hopes the change will do him good. The baby is a fine little chap and is very friendly. He is very interested in the water furrow in front of our flat. I am glad he makes himself at home with us. They are hoping to see Reg and Dot. It is just possible they may travel together in the same train as far as Naauwport unless Joyce stays longer as she is hoping to do.

This day next week Reg and Dot should be back here. We miss them very much. I am glad they are enjoying themselves at East London.

Had a nice newsy letter from Douglas. He wrote for my birthday but the letter has never arrived. He reports lots of rain at Mayong but none at his homestead which is serious. Arthur failed his J.C. exam but he is not sorry as he does not seem too strong. Blodwen writes that Joe has trouble in his feet. She fears blood poisoning. She too has an abscess on her knee which is very painful. She is looking forward to their holiday in March. Blodwen goes to Cape Town and Joe follows after he has been to Vryburg. They both look to return to Bloemfontein via Port Elizabeth and here. The children also have veldt sores. Hope to hear better news soon. Nothing startling from Kroonstad. Denis is now a boarder at Kingswood. Ruth is taking in some boarders. We have had it very hot here lately but the nights are generally cool, for which we are thankful.

It is breakfast time so I must stop. Thanks for all letters received. Hope you all will try to write at least once a week. Remember we are very lonely and love to hear all the news you can send.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

I am commencing my letter on Tuesday afternoon as we are expecting Reg and Dot some time tomorrow. We have not heard if they are going to see Ruth in Grahamstown on the way back.

One important piece of news this week is that Joe has bought my car and Reg and Dot will deliver it back in Bloemfontein to Joe. I hope I have done the right thing in selling it. I feel that I could still drive alright but others do not think so. I am very sorry to part with it but it is no pleasure to drive if passengers are nervous. However it is done now. Perhaps I will have another some day. I am giving up the garage from the end of this month. I shall miss it very much and so will a good many others to whom it has afforded a great deal of pleasure.

We are glad to hear brighter news from Joe and Blodwen. Joe's toes are better and Blodwen's knees are less painful. The heat probably has been the cause of these troubles. They look to start on their holidays at Easter.

Douglas and Evelyn have written for Mom's birthday. They report that they are badly in need of rain though a good deal has fallen in different parts. We had nice letters from Arthur, Lynne and Rex today from Kimberley. They all seem very happy at school and play.

We have only had a postcard from Reg and Dot during the week. They are on holiday so must be excused. We shall hear all the news when they arrive back. Grace writes that she has a boarder for her spare room. She is always busy in one way and another. The Hartly family, who have been resident in Kroonstad for many years, have suddenly decided to leave. He has been a great worker in the church and some of his duties will now fall upon Ted. A new Minister has just come there as well as here so that means extra work in settling in etc. The children all seem well. Ruth wrote for Mom's birthday. Denis is very happy as a boarder at Kingswood.

Mom's birthday was duly honoured. We had the following friends in for morning tea: Mr & Mrs Dersley, Rev & Mrs Weavers, Mrs Dulcie Moorcroft, Joyce & Dudley and Raymond. Aunt Eliza came in just at the end. Mom had quite a number of little reminders of the event. Alison sent some roses. She was not able to come as no servant had turned up. Mary came early in the morning and Mr and Miss Metcalf popped in in the afternoon to offer their congratulations. The next day we called on the Dersleys to offer our congratulations on Mr Dersley's 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. We also spent some time one evening in calling on Miss Inglesby who came up with Joyce and Dudley from Cape Town. I knew her very well whilst she was Secretary to the YWCA. She is returning to Cape Town with Dudley on Saturday morning. Joyce is staying some time longer.

What do you think of Aunt Letty flying to Port Elizabeth in company with Florrie to have her eyes attend to? The journey only took about 40 minutes. I wonder what these old young people will do next.

You will be sorry to hear that Uncle Herbert is getting weaker daily. It is only a matter of time. Nurse thought he was passing out last week. He will be seventy nine on Sunday, if he is spared. My own idea is that he will last quite a while yet. Unfortunately he had a fall a week or so ago whilst Nurse was helping him. The shock no doubt has affected him. They are trying to get an extra nurse for night duty.

I will post this tonight (Tuesday) as we shall sure to be busy tomorrow if Reg, Dot and children arrive.

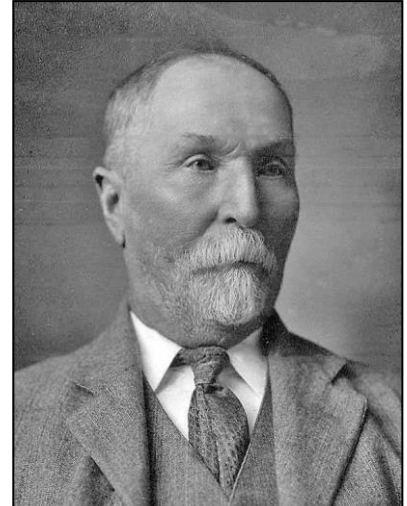
Good night everybody,  
Lots of love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

Grace's Pam is eight years old today. May she be spared to see many more. There are no less than three birthdays in the family next week. Aunt Hetty will be 83 on 21<sup>st</sup>, Aunt Emmie 71 on 23<sup>rd</sup> and Evelyn 45 on 27<sup>th</sup>. To all I wish everything of the best.

Uncle Herbert was 79 on Sunday last. As I have not a car anymore, we were handicapped in not being able to go on our own to congratulate him. Ernest kindly fell in with my suggestion that it would be nice if we could all go out in his car and just see him for a few minutes. Alison, Mary, Mom and I left about a quarter to five and were back again in time for service at 7.30. We found him in bed. He has not been properly dressed since he had an unfortunate fall about three weeks ago. He is only able to sit up in bed and get into a chair nearby. All the nearby members of the family had been to see him during the day – fortunately not altogether – and he said he had had a very happy day. He said to me he wondered if that would be his last birthday. I could only reply that we must live a day at a time and sufficient unto the day would his strength be. He is very calm and quiet. He suffers a good deal of pain at times but the medicine which he takes as a rule twice a day, gives him ease. It is very difficult to hold much conversation with him as he is so deaf and his voice is getting weaker. He is still quite interested in what goes on on the farm. He has two nurses attending him now – one for day and the other for night work. We can only hope he will not have to suffer a long illness. It is now eighteen months since the "op".



Herbert Joseph Collett 1928

You will be sorry to hear of the death of Connie Halse. We sent them cards at Xmas and I thought it strange that we did not hear from them as we usually do. This week I had a letter from Mrs Halse saying that Connie was playing golf and felt that something had broken inside. After a few days, it got worse and a doctor had to operate and found a fibrous growth in the stomach. Complications set in and in ten days she passed away. She was such a strong fine girl and was the life and soul of the family. She did splendid service in the war driving lorries etc. about in France and nursing. Both brothers died as the result of the war and her only sister has lost her only child. Poor Mrs Halse feels it terribly. We attended Mr Halse's funeral at Stellenbosch some years ago. What a lot we have to be thankful for. All Mom's family of twelve still living.

Reg and Dot left with my car at 6.30 am on Wednesday last. We have not heard yet what time they arrived at Joe's but had a wire from Johannesburg station on Thursday morning saying they had a good journey so must have caught the 8 pm train from Bloemfontein on Wednesday night. We see in the paper that a heavy thunderstorm passed over Potgietersrus on Sunday night and a girl was blinded by the flash. They were due to arrive that evening.

Dudley Townshend left with Miss Inglesby on Saturday morning. Joyce is staying a time longer. She pops in to see us occasionally but Aunt Eliza won't let her come and stay with us. We are expecting Leslie Hudson and his wife and children on Saturday on their way back by motor to Vryburg. They have been spending their holiday at East London with his mother. We are glad to hear that she is much better at the coast.

I am writing this before breakfast instead of taking my usual morning walk. I am still sleeping on the back stoep and like it. I always wake early. Must stop now and have breakfast,

Los of love to all,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

We have had an interesting week. Leslie, Gwen and their two sweet children arrived on Saturday afternoon just in time to enable us to wire to Rev Legg saying they had agreed to spend the weekend with us instead of proceeding to Graaff Reinet on Sunday morning. I reckoned that it would be more convenient for the Leggs to have their Sunday free as no doubt he would have his services to take. They had a nice run up from Grahamstown where they saw Ruth. Having their own car, they were able to get about a good deal. They did the same trip as Reg and Dot to Lake Arthur whilst we were at meeting. We went with them to the warm bath and all over the town and they were agreeably surprised at the size and cleanliness of the town. Leslie had only passed through by train before and was not favourably impressed. Gwen's Mother was born in Cradock and of course we pointed out the house. It is very different now to what it was in her day. They went to church with us in the evening and enjoyed our new minister. They fetched Aunt Charlotte and took her home afterwards. They also saw Aunt Eliza and Joyce. They were very glad to have seen Eric's sister as he farms about six miles from Eric and knows them very well. The little boy and girl are very sweet children and were so pleased to get into the water furrow. They left after breakfast on Monday and we hope arrived safely at their farm by now. They looked to spend Tuesday night in Bloemfontein and would see Joe and Blodwen. We enjoyed their visit very much. I did not actually see them leave as I had to go with some other Councillors to inspect one of the farms which have been let for ten years. It is the old property which was bought just over fifty years ago owing to its good water supply. The farm is where cousin Willie Trollip and family lived for years, Houtzbaaken, about twenty miles to the north of the town. The water is still good and is brought into town. We have other sources of supply since then. When we got there we had to go on horses round some of the camps. It is many years since I mounted a horse but managed alright. It was a case of walking pace most of the way. They gave me a nice Basuto pony to ride. We brought back a supply of prickly pears which we have enjoyed. We returned just at one. I spotted a snake whilst walking over the veldt. Two of the party had walked over it and not seen it. Of course we killed it.

You will be sorry to hear that on Sunday afternoon Mrs Lidbetter was buried. It appears that shortly after their month's holiday at Cape Town, they went to a bioscope show here in town and caught colds. Both Mr and Mrs were ill for a few days but Mrs was the worst. Mom called on her on Thursday but did not see her as she was not well. The cold developed into double pneumonia and she died on Saturday afternoon. We were to have had meeting there on Sunday am but met at Mary's instead. She was buried by the Anglican minister in the Methodist cemetery. His niece from Johannesburg has come to stay with him for a while. We are all very sorry for Mr Lidbetter. They have a lovely home. No children.

We have seen a good deal of Joyce and Raymond. She often brings him down in his golf-cart and he seems to enjoy it. He is very good and obedient and is a credit to his parents. Joyce does not have a nurse girl but looks after him herself. Gladys and her two boys are expected at Aunt Eliza's about 19<sup>th</sup> March. We have not heard definitely if the Gushes are coming to us at Easter. They talked of doing so when they wrote at Xmas time.

You will be interested in hearing that Muriel and Wallis have got a year's leave and are going to England. Aunt Emmie has practically decided to go with them. Uncle Willie wants to know if I will also accompany them. I don't think so. I am more likely to build a house for ourselves. However we shall see.

Have had my walk this am, and must stop for breakfast. We are both well,

Love to all  
Dad



Wednesday March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

I do not know if you will appreciate the new paper on which I am typing this week. The fact is that I have used up all the smaller size and Mr Thomas at the Book Shop suggested that if I used a longer sheet (foolscap), I would be able to write longer letters and it would save doing a second sheet which I sometimes do. However, I will try it and see how it works. One of my difficulties is to find time to write all I would like to say. It is nice to know that you appreciate the weekly letter but for my part, I do not see much in them. It does give me a great deal of pleasure to keep in touch with you all in this way and am so thankful to be able to do it. I may also say that I have offered this typewriter to Aunt Emmie as I think it would be useful to her for writing her weekly letters when she goes to England. Her writing, like mine, is not too easily read and it would save her a lot of copying. Reg offered to get me a new machine (Underwoods) at trade price but I have had a Remington portable machine offered me cheaply which I shall take if Aunt Emmie takes this one. I asked the party if he would guarantee that it would spell better than mine does.

My wireless has been giving me lots of trouble lately. It generally happens just when the news is coming through. I have written to Grahamstown and Johannesburg but they say it must be something wrong locally. So I am getting the outfit tested and hope for better reception.

For more than a month I have been subscribing to the Eastern Province Herald which is sent up from Port Elizabeth by motorcar every morning and is delivered at about ten am. I find it quite interesting and it gives fairly complete news of parliament etc. It takes me a good deal of time to get through it so I am thinking of giving it up as it interferes with other work that I want to do.

When we were at Potgietersrus, I was negotiating for the purchase of Mrs Heathcot's piano, which I knew was a good one. They did not accept my offer. On Saturday last, a pianola was offered for sale by Mrs Holmes of Upington who has been living in Cradock for some time and has now given up housekeeping and is going to live in East London. We understand she has been separated from her husband. The pianola is a beautiful instrument and cost her £130 in Johannesburg. There are 87 rolls of music with it which cost from 6/- to £1 each besides the cabinet in which to keep them and the music stool as well. It did not fetch her reserve on the sale and afterwards she phoned to me asking if I was still interested in it as I had asked her some questions about it. Well, we came to terms and it is now in our lounge and I am sure we shall get a great deal of pleasure out of it. Of course Mom can play it as a piano and I can play it as a pianola. So there you are. You shall have first class music when you come to see us next time. You see I have got rid of one plaything and have got another which will not run any risks of killing anyone by running over them. We have shifted the settee into the dining room and the pianola stands where that did. The cabinet stands between the fireplace and door into the passage. When I get time, I shall make a list of the rolls of music and will send round a copy.

We were shocked to hear last week of the sudden death of Mr W H Robson at Cape Town. He attended Friends meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> and took part in same. On Monday, he had a heart attack in his bathroom and died on the spot. His body was cremated the next day. He and his wife were going to England and had reserved accommodation of four different vessels so as to take the first one that had available room. They have no children but had adopted a girl whom they had sent to England to school and they were following as soon as they could. They will be greatly missed in Cape Town.

We have had some strange visitors during the week. One night Mom heard a noise in her bedroom but I could not see anything and slept outside as usual. We had Mrs Mason (Daisy Collett) and her daughter, who is at Rocklands, staying with us for the weekend and the next morning she complained (or rather remarked) that they heard strange noises in their room during the night but did not like to disturb the house. When I came in to dress, the noise was again in Mom's room so I got the torch on the job and sure enough, there was a large crab in the corner by the washstand. It had evidently travelled along the passage from one room to the other. I got

the coal tongs and removed the intruder. On Sunday evening we were all sitting out in front trying to get cool after service and a terrifically hot day. Two of Rev Douglas' granddaughters, who are also at Rocklands, and three of the Radfords were with us (all enjoying fruit). Our next door neighbour told us the next morning that they were sitting out on their stoep after we had gone to bed and they saw a snake come into our front garden. We wonder who or what will be our next visitor. We have not seen the snake but are keeping a look out for it. Gladys and her two boys may be coming to Aunt Eliza for the Easter school holidays. Joyce is returning to Cape Town on Saturday morning. We shall miss her visits. She often pops in with Raymond. Eric writes very happily about his farm. He has waterfalls etc. on it. He has named it Hollowdene, P.O. Pudimoe, Cape Province. It is breakfast time and so I must stop.

Love to all

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My Dear All,

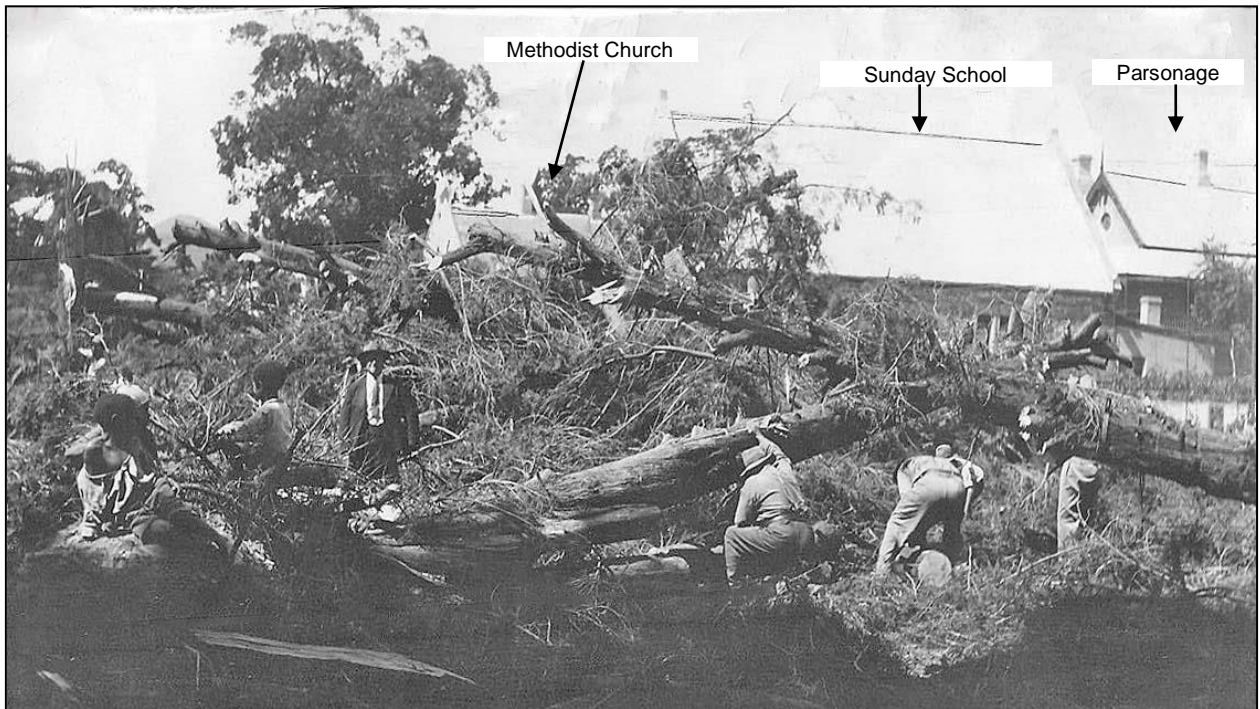
Well, we may be thankful that we are able to write from the same address. On Thursday evening I sent you each a postcard saying we were safe. March 4<sup>th</sup> will always stand as a red letter day in the history of Cradock. It was the first day of the Agricultural Show and a large number of visitors were in town for the occasion. It frequently rains on show days and we took the precaution to take umbrellas with us. We had had five days of excessive heat and the nights were also very hot. So much so, that I found even a sheet was oppressive. The show yard is, as you probably know, over the river and close to the station. Ethne's sister, Vic, was here in the morning by car and offered to take us over for the opening. Uncle Gervase and Rouena also called but would not stay to dinner. They came in time for the opening so we all went together. The Minister of Railways had promised to open the Show but could not come and his substitute was also unable but a Railway official was deputed to come but owing to the difficulty in getting a start from Cape Town, was late. The official opening therefore did not come off. We were sitting on the show stand watching the parade of animals. I noticed the approach of a storm and in a few minutes it was upon us with great violence. There was some hail. The thunder and lightning was very severe and the wind had the force of a gale. The storm water from the Railway camp soon flooded the ground and we were all weather bound. Most of the cars were outside the Show grounds and the water was like a young river running between us and the road. After waiting some time, we were able to get a taxi to take us home, little thinking we should see such a sight of destruction as awaited us.

We found that trees had been blown down near Ernest's house, the Poplars, and we had to go round by the back of the Town Hall and down past the Club. We were stopped there as other trees in the direction of our flat were also down. Rain had stopped falling so we walked home. The big tree immediately in front of our door was down and several others. The street was completely blocked. The rain fell from the west (the back of our house) and had beaten into the dining room and the floor was soaked. The hearth rug was sopping wet. The maid had, of course, gone home so we had to get to and clean up. Of course the trees falling had broken all the electric wires and our telephone was also cut off. The main roof, fortunately, had not leaked except where electric wires had entered. No serious damage was done. Fortunately we always keep some candles in the house so were able to manage. We have been able to manage so far as breakfast and supper is concerned but as we have no stove or other means of cooking, we have had to buy a small paraffin stove for making our breakfast etc. but have done what I have wanted to do for a long while – that is send out to Mrs Deerecourt for our midday meal. We had enough over from Thursday to keep us going for Friday and now we have had two days' supply from her and find the arrangement quite satisfactory. Her house is near here – a little way past Ernest's. Unfortunately our maid, Matilda, got sick and has not been to work since Friday night so it has been very awkward but we are still going strong. Over 40 trees were blown down between the Poplars and the prison. Of course we walked all over the place to see the debris. A special meeting of the Council was called for Friday morning when we decided to remove all the trees in the street between the park and prison. The Council has been able to get the assistance of the National Road Board and the Divisional Council to lend us their caterpillar tractors and they have been busy ever since pulling down the trees. As I write, Sunday evening, there is not a tree standing between the Poplars and our next corner. The trees are lying in the street and Natives and coloured people are chopping off the branches and removing them for their own use as fast as they can. The tractors are pulling the stumps down to the river street out of the way as fast as they can. They have been working all day today and will be at it for some days yet. The tractor is tearing up the street and pathways and it will cost the town a small fortune to get things right again. All the electric light standards have to be taken out. Many of them were bent like pieces of paper by the falling trees. It will be some time before the street will be right again. The

caterpillar tractors have dug big holes in the road and on the foot walks. Mercifully to relate, not a single person has been hurt or injured in any way. Some say Bree Street will be worth living in now because we shall get more air and sunshine. Others say it will not be worth living in because all the beauty of the trees has gone. Please excuse mistakes. I am typing by lamp light and it is not too good. Will send each of you am/News giving an account of the happenings.

Lots of love to all

Dad



Opposite 53A Bree Street, Cradock : 4<sup>th</sup> March 1937

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday March 10<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

Monday morning. As I still have the typewriter on my table and it is only 7 and the sun is shining brightly into the room, I may as well carry on till breakfast time. Mom has had her early cup of tea and so far Matilda has not put in an appearance and I do not know if she will be here today. It is washing day but that can easily be postponed if necessary.

Men are busy chopping away at the trees and will be for some time yet. The sun is shining in at our bathroom window which shows how much further south the sun is rising. We shall find the house much nicer in the winter now that all the trees are removed but we shall miss the beautiful shade in the summer.

I do not remember if I told you that Aunt Rouena has adopted a little girl baby of 18 months old. She and her maid spent the night here the day of the storm as it was impossible for them to get home owing to the spruits being full. Some farmers did attempt it but had to turn back. All the hotels were full and Gervase and Roslin's young man slept at the Parsonage that night but had supper and breakfast with us. There is another baby sister that the parents are looking for someone to adopt and it was suggested that Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate (Grass Ridge) might take her but I understand they have decided not to.

Later. Matilda just come but is coughing a good deal. Sydney Geard has just popped in so must stop. He has gone to fetch his wife and they will have breakfast with us. What a surprise. 9 am, the Geards have just left. They look to go as far as Bloemfontein today and then on to Vryburg tomorrow. I did not recognise Sydney when he came in. It is twenty years since I last saw him in Vryburg. He has got much stouter and has a moustache. They were very interested in seeing some of the snapshots of you all. They hope to see Joe and Blodwen this evening. Their two little girls were very interested in the two beds on the back stoep. They enjoyed their breakfast (porridge, bacon and eggs) all cooked on a single blue flame stove. Of course their car could not get nearer than the end of the street owing to the trees in the street. They had come from Bedford this morning. Sydney enquired about Emma and Dossie etc. We called to see them when we were in Pietersburg last December but they were away at the time.

We are thankful to have the maid back. She will be able to go and fetch our dinner. Of course we have not the wireless going but we hope to have the telephone connected today.

We are very pleased with the dinners Mrs Derecourt sends us. For instance, yesterday (Sunday) we had chicken, peas, beans, rice, turnip, pudding and grapes and figs. We could have had soup but asked her not to send any. We have to send our own three-decker receptacle for the food. All this is only costing us one shilling each per day. The helpings are so large that there is quite enough for the servant as well as ourselves. I hope we shall continue with this arrangement as it will save a lot of trouble and will be a saving in electric current, butcher's bills and vegetables etc.

You will see in the Midland News I am sending you a report of an accident Uncle Norman's son, Godfrey, had whilst motoring into town. He sounded his hooter as he approached a native in the road and instead of jumping out of the road, he jumped in front of the car and died shortly after he was taken to hospital. No one knows who the native was or where he came from.

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>. I wonder what surprises we are going to have today. Aunt Eliza came down yesterday afternoon to have another look at the debris and was surprised to see how much they had cleared away. We have joined with our neighbour to share having one of the trees in front of our houses sawn up and divided between us. The Council is only too pleased to let anyone have them and so save them the expense of removing them. There are dozens more still to be pulled down. The electric light department have started re-erecting poles and they hope to let us have light in the course of a day or two. We have got the telephone fixed up already. I am buying some snaps to send round but the photographers and chemists are sold out of films and busy developing as fast as they can.

Last Sunday was Harvest Thanksgiving day and it was difficult for people to get to church. No cars could get into the street and it was a case of threading one's way between the stumps. Fortunately most people had torches. I took service at the Coloured Church in the evening and one of the men escorted me home part of the way but it was very difficult as there was no moon.

Joyce left on Saturday morning. I went to see her off and was surprised to see Tom Webster on the same train going back to Cape Town. It was fortunate as he was able to help Joyce with the changing etc. It has been very nice seeing as much of her as we have been able. Gladys and her boys may be coming at Easter but it is not settled yet.

I find we shall not have any light just outside our front door as we have had up to the present. They are rearranging the standards. The nearest will be at our garage door. Our neighbour on the right has had the two Cyprus trees that were standing near his furrow removed and is going to build a nice wall in front and put a veranda to his house. I am sure we shall need a veranda too in the summer time.

Matilda has turned up to work again this morning so I hope we shall not have further trouble on that score.

I should have said that I had accepted an invitation to the Show dinner for last Thursday but as everything was so upset and having Uncle Gervase and family here and no servant made it quite out of the question.

Aunt Emmie has provisionally booked her passage to England for August but as she says, a great many things may happen between this and then. It will be nice for Muriel to have her mother with her. I hope the English winter will not be too much for her. I think she would like me to go as well. Mom says she will not go in any case.

Blodwen is starting on Saturday for Cape Town and the following week, Joe starts on his holiday and goes to Douglas first and then on to Cape Town and they all return via Port Elizabeth and will spend some time with us on their way back to Bloemfontein. They are not taking the car as Joe gets a free pass for himself and family once every year.

So far we do not know of any visitors coming to us for Easter. Reg and Dot are talking of running down to Kroonstad as they did not see Grace on their recent holiday.

Wednesday morning. Ernest and Alison were here last evening and told us that Sydney Geard first went to their house. This was about seven am and walked right into the kitchen (thinking it was our house) and asked the maid to tell the master that there was an old friend come to see him. Ernest sent the girl to ask his name but he would not give it. At last Ernest went to see who it was in his dressing gown and of course did not know him. This was about seven and no one was up. He then sent him on here. I did not recognise him either. However, we were very pleased to see them.

The men are getting on famously with the re-erection of the electric light standards. They are only placing them on one side of the street now as it will not be necessary to hang the lamps from the middle of the road now that the trees are out of the way. We shall not have a street lamp right in front of our bedroom as before as they are distributing the standards more equally along the road. We are hoping to have the lights switched on tomorrow.

We had two boys sawing up the tree that was standing near our garage yesterday and they managed to cut nine big logs out of it. They are going to saw up another today. We shall not want firewood for a long time.

Blodwen writes that she has been troubled with hay fever and asthma lately and Doctor tells her she will always be subject to it up country. This is very unfortunate. It is to be hoped that the change will do her good. Roy is also troubled with a rash which the doctor is of the opinion is a form of asthma. Joe is to have an operation when he returns.

Grace is kept very busy with church work of one sort and another. The children are well. We are thinking of sending up some of our empty fruit jars to be filled as she says fruit is very cheap in Kroonstad. The carriage is 5/4d per 100 pounds. Empty bottles weight about 1½ pounds each.

Ernest's Dorothy is in hospital for appendicitis. She had the operation on Monday and is getting on nicely. She spent her holiday at Louisvale and was troubled with it there.

Alice Biggs and Alan came over for the Show last week and returned next day. They phoned from here to different places to enquire about the road as they feared the storm might have made them impassable. It appears the storm was not general. Aunt Letty flew from Port Elizabeth with Florrie on Monday. She is over 80.

Aunt Rosa has been staying at Uncle Herbert's for a while but has gone back home. Uncle is still lingering. We have not been out since his birthday but he is getting weaker gradually.

Post has been coming very late lately. Some days they give us two deliveries a day instead of keeping all the mail back for late trains. We are very thankful for good news from each home when it comes. I hope I have not over done you with letters this week but I expected you would want to hear all about the storm.

If there is anything to reply to in letters which may come later, I will try to do so. There is to be a special Council meeting at twelve so must get finished with this.

Much love to you all as though named,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

On Monday we had the pleasure of a surprise visit from Cyril Brown, Harper's old chum. When he called at the house, I was at a Council committee meeting so he called up at the Town Office and I saw him for a few minutes. He enquired about the photo of his father which I had asked him to present to the Council as Garrat Brown was a chairman of the Municipality in my early days. He was a great friend of my brother James. He had sent it on but it had not arrived when he called. Strange to say it was delivered before he called back at the office and so I was pleased to see it and I showed him the Council Chamber where it will be hung. He had dinner with us and left shortly after to take Mr and Mrs Willie Brown from the farm to Somerset East. He was going to see Ruth (his cousin) on his way back to Outshoorn. It was a great pleasure to renew old memories.

We have now heard that Gladys and her two boys are arriving on Saturday night and of course will be staying with Aunt Eliza. We shall see as much of them as we can. They will see a big difference in Cradock since their last visit.

Bree Street is getting straighter every day. We had the electric light restored on Wednesday evening for which we were very thankful. There is a lot of work to be done in renovating the streets and tree planting will have to be considered carefully so as to be sure we do not get the wrong sort of tree again. It is most likely that the row of big trees in Church Street will also have to come down as they are very heavy and will cause a lot of damage to property should they fall. We have secured quite a number of stumps sawn off the trees that fell which will keep us supplied with firewood for a long while. We only use wood for the lounge in the winter. We find our front room very hot now that the trees are gone. It will be nice in the winter but I am afraid we shall have either to have sun shutters or a veranda erected before the summer. The trees in Dundas Street have not yet been removed except those that fell in the storm.

I am sending to Joe (as he is the nearest) thirty snaps of the storm havoc. I hope he will pass them on quickly from one to another and return them all to me as soon as possible. I may get some more later on if I can borrow the negatives.

We have not heard definitely if Blodwen left last Saturday for Cape Town but expect she did. We shall be interested in hearing how she got on. Joe will be starting next week, going to Douglas first.

Douglas writes that they have had about twenty inches of rain at his other farm this season and has had to remove some of his cattle as the farm is too wet. This is something new for South African farming. He has a number of cattle he is preparing for export. Their children will be home from boarding school next week. Arthur and a couple of his school chums are going to bike up. It will be a new experience for them. They are to have a party on Cicely's birthday. Rex is to go to boarding school next year.

Grace writes that fruit is plentiful in Kroonstad so we are sending her some fruit jars to fill. There is not much fruit here this season.

We are continuing to get our midday meal from Mrs Derecourt and are well satisfied with what she sends us. We shall be able to see better when we have tried the service for a month how it pans out. We find that the two dinners she sends are generally enough for ourselves and the servant.

We are still finding enjoyment out of the pianola. I want to get a better variety of music but many that we have are quite pretty. I have written to Rev Perry who had a similar instrument. If any of you know of anyone who has a pianola, you might ask them.

I wonder if any of you notice any difference in the type used in this letter? I have a Remington portable in use now and am disposing of the Corona. I have to get used to the machine before I am perfect.



I am having a little trouble in my left elbow joint. It has been giving me a small amount of pain for some months past but latterly it has been rather more troublesome. It is difficult to lift any weight. I hope it is not rheumatism again.

One evening we listened to an address by a Miss Venniker, a converted Jewess, in the Town Hall. If you have the chance of hearing her, you should do so. There were a number of Jews at the meeting.

I hope all the children will enjoy their holidays. We expect to be alone and are not planning to go anywhere. Uncle Herbert still keeps about the same. We have not seen him since his birthday.

Lots of love to as though named,  
Dad

52a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I expect you are all noticing how dark it is at six in the morning. It is 6.30 now and we have had our early coffee but I shall soon have to do my typing by electric light. The removal of the trees in front has made a considerable difference to the light in the lounge but in a few weeks time, it will be quite dark. I am still sleeping outside and it is getting appreciably colder. I hope to keep it up as long as I can.

On Sunday morning, just as we were sitting down to breakfast (8.30), we had another pleasant surprise visit. Br S J Berry of Queenstown walked in. He used to be in my Young Men's class years ago and when we lived in Market Street, lived almost opposite us. He had two little girls and a son who were very friendly with your children. One married daughter came to see me whilst in Hospital and brought flowers. He had been to see her in Port Elizabeth and had just returned the evening before. Mrs Berry had motored over from Tarkastad that morning to meet him. He stayed and had breakfast with us and Mrs came later and had a chat on their way out. They have passed through many difficulties since those early days but we both looked back with much thankfulness to the happy times spent together in the church vestry. At present he is running a cafe in Queenstown. We have asked them to come and spend a weekend with us one of these days.

Gladys and her boys arrived on Saturday evening. Their friend, Mr & Mrs Law, met them with their car. We did not see Gladys until Monday. They were out motoring when we called on Sunday afternoon. The boys have grown considerably since they were here two years ago. They were very interested in the working of the pianola. We hope to see a good deal of them before they go back to Cape Town.

We have had a couple of boys sawing up logs from the trees since Monday. We shall have enough wood to last us a very long while when it is all split and put away. We only use wood in the lounge in the winter evenings.

I tried to get a supply of winter apples like I sent you a year or two ago but the farmer tells me that owing to late frost last November and the shortage of water from Grass Ridge dam, he will not have a single apple for sale this season. Perhaps next year I shall be able to send you some.

Joe writes that perhaps he may send his car to Cape Town as his brother-in-law is going on a motoring holiday and so would not be able to have the use of his car. Joe starts his holiday tomorrow and is due at Douglas on Good Friday morning.

Blodwen writes that she had a comfortable journey down and is looking forward to Joe's arrival. All her ailments disappear at the coast. The Free State climate does not seem to agree with her.

Grace is disappointed that Reg and Dot are not going to them at Easter. It is a long time to wait for the next holidays.

Did I tell you that Douglas had to shift his cattle from Mayong as it was too wet there. He reckons that during three months, he had about twenty-five inches of rain on that place. We wish we could get some of it down here. Grass Ridge dam is practically empty and unless we get rain before the end of this month, it will be very serious both for farmers who depend on the water for their winter crops and also for the town. At present we are on short rations.

Some of the choir are going to Fish River service on Good Friday. If we are offered a seat, we should like to go so as to see Uncle Herbert again. We are certainly not going to ask for a lift. Ernest and family are going to Bushmans River mouth for the weekend. Alice and family are there. Dorothy is out of hospital and seems to be getting on nicely.

Recently I had occasion to write to the Broadcasting Co and a Mr H O Collett signed the reply. I wrote asking him if he was any relation but he regretfully thinks not. He says there is also another Collett in the employ as an announcer. He is from England and was an actor. He

does not know anything regarding his relationship. Evidently there are a number of Colletts in the country who are not related. I met a station master at Ladysmith, Natal, some years ago. He too was a Collett.

Later. The only letter received today is from Grace who reports colds in the family. She is busy as usual – as all members of the circle are – which is a good thing. I attended Council meeting last evening which was not over until past ten. This morning I have attended an executive meeting of the United Party. So I am kept pretty busy in one way and another. I wish Mom would take up croquet again. I have been asked to join the local club but am not going to join alone. Ruth talks of returning my set of bowls as she has another set. At present we have no recreation except walking. This is quite healthy so far as it goes.

Hope you are all well, excuse all mistakes,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

Easter has come and gone and I do not expect we shall get any letters tomorrow as we generally do owing to Monday having been a public holiday. I don't suppose Ted will agree with me when I suggest that the Post Office should not observe these holidays but should be classed amongst the public services – such as light, water, etc. We spent the days very quietly. We went to service at 7.30 am and had the offer of seats to go to Fish River as the choir were going out to take part in the service there at 11 am. Mom did not like going for so short a visit so we did not go at all. As it happened, we could have stayed the night as Aunt Jessie came in on Saturday morning. Five cars went and after the service in the church, the choir went down to Uncle Herbert's and sang a couple of anthems outside his bedroom window. He was pleased with this. We had no callers that day. In the evening we went along to the Parsonage and listened in to the address of the Archbishop of Canterbury from London. On Sunday I took the morning service. In the afternoon, we almost had a repetition of the Show Day storm. So far as rainfall is concerned, it did equal it. At times we could not see across the road, the rain was so dense. An inch fell in about half an hour. Our kitchen roof again leaked and the water came streaming in into the dining room from inside as well as outside. I hope Ernest will have the roof seen to before we get another storm. One of the big peppers at the back of their garden was blown down. By the way, Gladys says she remembers the tree being planted when they were living at the Poplars. We had to mop up the water in the dining room. Fortunately my bed did not get wet but the stoep was very wet so I slept in that night. Ernest and some of the family went to the Bushmans river mouth where Alice has a cottage. They only got back on Tuesday afternoon. Ernest's Dorothy was 21 on Saturday. Grace's David is 11 today and Douglas' Cecily is six tomorrow. Easter Monday we did nothing. It was a perfect day for an outing but such luxuries are things of the past, without a car one is pretty helpless. We went for a walk to the park and back. We picture Joe at Douglas' and expect he will be leaving for Cape Town today or Thursday. He has decided to have the car there as well. We do not know when he and Blodwen will be arriving here on their return to Bloemfontein.

In turning out some family papers, I have come across copies of Grandpa and Grandma Golden Wedding Souvenir. I had kept copies for each of you and now that you each have homes of your own, I am sending them to you and I suggest that you keep them with the Family tree Uncle Willie prepared.

For three or four days last week, I had a couple of boys sawing and chopping up some of the tree stumps we secured from the debris. Our wood room is almost chock-a-block with it and there are some stumps still to split. I shall try my hand at this in the early mornings for exercise.

Eric writes giving particulars of shooting snakes on his stoep and in a tree in front of his house. Freda is not too well and Doctor wants to operate for gall trouble.

We shall be interested in hearing results of school exams. Hope the reports will be satisfactory. Wonder how Arthur and his chum got on on their cycle trip from Kimberley to Vryburg. Quite an experience for them.

I had rather a nasty experience a few days ago. I was sleeping under the grapefruit tree and a tack scratched my temple. It bled profusely and I think will leave a nasty scar. Then I tried to support the branch on a plank so as to give more head room. The plank slipped and down came the branch and scratched my face and bending my spectacle frame. It made my nose rather sore but hope nothing serious has happened. It is alright now, I notice by the way that I am at last getting rather bald. I am evidently following Douglas and Joe in that respect. Talking of accidents, yesterday afternoon we called on Mrs Cursons (Editor's wife) and she had had a much more serious accident. She had been arranging the flummery at the top of her curtain, standing on top of a ladder, when the ladder broke and she fell, damaging her face, legs and arms. It was

a wonder she did not break her neck. Take warning girls, ladders were not made for such as you to climb.

It was much colder last night and I was glad to pull up an additional blanket this morning. I had to go to the station for the early train so put on my cardigan for the first time this morning. We are having very nice weather since the rain on Sunday. No water has gone into Grass Ridge dam I am sorry to say. I don't know what we are going to do for the winter gardens. I see I have about filled my sheet so must stop for another week.

Hope to hear from you all soon.

Lots of love,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I seem to have a long list of notes of things I want to write about this week. I find it a good plan to have a sheet of paper on the side of my desk on which I can always jot down things as I think of them. My first is that I have stopped subscribing to the Eastern Province Herald and so have more time for other things. It is also a saving of 4/6d per month. I miss the news but I suppose it does not matter if I am not so up to date as formerly.

We hear from Aunt Emmie that Joe arrived at Plumstead whilst she was visiting Blodwen. He had not announced when he was arriving. We have not had a line from him since he left Bloemfontein the day before Good Friday. We shall expect them here some time next week, I guess. His car had arrived at Cape Town but they are coming by train.

Your letters were late in reaching us last week owing to the Easter holidays. We congratulate Grace and Ted on their children's successes at school. Jean, who went to school for the first time this year, came top of her class out of 33 scholars. Pam was 9<sup>th</sup>, David 4<sup>th</sup> and Harold 18<sup>th</sup>. They seem to be pleased to get back to school which speaks well for scholars and teachers. Grace is busy as usual in good works, collecting for church funds etc. Ted is hoping to get the Post Office tennis club going again. I hope he has received a substantial increase in salary under the new scale.

Dot reports a sick family circle. Mrs Hudson not so well again and Mr Hudson is having to go into Vryburg hospital for observation. Dot was also suffering from swelled head (not from pride, she says) but a miserable cold. The children were also suffering from nettle rash. Hope to hear a better report this week.

We had a note from Rev Legg this week asking if it will be convenient for them to spend Friday night with us on their return from East London to Graaff Reinet. Of course we shall be glad to have them.

Ernest's Guy has been suffering from warts on his hands and feet. The doctor has operated on them and he has gone back to University. It seems quite a new treatment for this complaint.

I attended a sale recently and saw a white iron bath and thought it was an enamel one. Not having on my right specs, I made a mistake. However, rather than install it, I have exchanged it for a proper enamelled one and this is now duly installed. It is a great comfort as the old one was a painted one over zinc. I understand that Uncle John sent it out many years ago. We have sent the old one along to the Poplars in case they may want to reinstall it if we should leave this flat. Perhaps if we do, they might take over ours.

I have half a dozen more snaps of the storm disaster but I will keep them until Joe and Blodwen have seen them. The others I sent round have not yet reached me, perhaps Joe has them at Cape Town.

We are not able to get our dinner quite as early as we used to do as we have to send for it. You know I am always anxious to hear the wireless news at ten past one so we have decided to have our dinner in the lounge which saves me leaving the table to get the news when we had our dinner in the dining room. This is an improvement.

We hired a taxi on Monday afternoon and took Gladys and the boys for a spin round by Hales Owen and on to the warm baths and across the river. It was just 24 miles. We have often done the same trip in our own car. It was a lovely afternoon and we all enjoyed it. Uncle Gervase and Rouena, Roslin and the baby were in on Tuesday and took Gladys' boys out with them. Aunt Jessie will bring them back on Friday as Gladys goes back to Cape Town by Saturday morning's train.

On Monday morning we listened in to the welcome to the new Governor-General from the City Hall, Cape Town. It came through splendidly.

Mr Farren, who had a pianola at Cape Town, has kindly given me a number of suggestions re records. Rev Perry has also written asking to exchange a dozen of mine for his. I use the instrument a good deal more than Mom does. There are some very pretty pieces amongst them.

We shall be interested in hearing how Arthur got on on his bike home. Suppose all the children are back at Kimberley school by now. Hope they have had a pleasant holiday.

I was nearly forgetting to refer to the splendid photograph Reg and Dot have sent us of themselves and children taken when they were here. It is an excellent group and we value it highly.

Uncle Herbert still keeps about the same. We are not sure if we shall go out this weekend to see him, it will depend on the Leggs' visit and if Aunt Jessie comes in. We might go by train if she does not come by car.

Well, I think I have exhausted my stock of news and paper.

Love from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday April 14<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

As we are expecting Joe and Blodwen to arrive early tomorrow morning, I am commencing my epistle a day earlier than usual.

We are somewhat concerned regarding Dot's health. Her last letter said she was suffering from the worst cold she had ever had. She was feeling very miserable and her friend, Mrs Dewar, wanted to take her to the farm for a change. She does not say if she had the doctor, but I am inclined to think she has a touch of malaria. We are anxious to hear later news. I have told her if it is necessary for Mom to go to her, she must let us know. Perhaps we shall hear tomorrow (Wednesday). Norman has sent a crayon drawing in colours which Dot says he did by himself except for a little colouring which she helped him with. It shows considerable skill I think and I hope he will develop in that way.

Uncle Gervase was in last week and took Alan and Keith back with him to his farm for a few days. They enjoyed the change greatly, had some rides etc. Aunt Jessie brought them back on Friday. They all left on Saturday morning for Cape Town. It has been nice to see them all again. It is two years since they were here before. Aunt Eliza says they are much better for the change.

Ruth is letting Denis go to Windhoek (SWA) for his holiday with some of his school chums. It will be a splendid chance for him to see a new part of the country. Kingswood School only have three term holidays in the year. We shall hope to see him as he passes here.

I wonder if any of you heard Ruth on the wireless last Wednesday afternoon. She was fairy godmother in the Children's Hour and told them one of her fairy stories. Her voice came over the air very clearly. Hope we may know when next she is "on the air". I hope she is paid for her services.

The photos of the storm havoc came back on Monday from Evelyn. Unfortunately there was no letter with them so we do not know how they are getting on up there. Of course the children have been home for the school holidays and no doubt that has prevented them writing. However we shall hear what news there is from Joe tomorrow. There will be quite a lot to talk about as we have not heard anything of his movements for the past three weeks except what Aunt Emmie has told since his arrival in Cape Town. I suppose we must excuse holiday makers from writing but a postcard now and then would be acceptable.

I have spent a good deal of time during the past week in looking through old papers etc. Amongst them I found the account of my trip to the edge of beyond – the last surveyed farm in Bechuanaland – in 1910. I have not had time to reread it yet but hope to do so. I should like to go over the same ground again – by motor instead of ox wagon – and compare the difference between then and now. I also found a number of snaps of crops of mealies etc which I had intended using in a booklet advertising the country. These I have sent back to Mr Frylinck who gave them to me at the time. As I get deeper in this work, I know I shall see much that will interest me.

On Monday afternoon as I was shutting our front gate, Miss Dowthwaite of Cape Town passed and greeted me. She is sister of the YMCA auditor with whom I had a great deal to do. She spent the evening with us and we shall see more of her before she returns to Cape Town. Her brother lives just opposite Joyce and Dudley at Mowbray. They had a terrible motor accident a year or so ago and Joyce and Aunt Emmie helped them a great deal. He and his wife were the first ones we took for a spin after I had learned to drive my first car.

I saw an advert in the old Northern News recently of a house for sale so I wrote for particulars. It is far too big and the position, even supposing we were seriously contemplating a change, does not appeal to us.

The weather is decidedly colder at nights. It has been down to 43. We have not started fires yet but shall probably do so this evening or tomorrow when Joe and Blodwen arrive.



As I have about filled my sheet and come to the end of my notes, I may as well post this today and perhaps I will write again after Joe and Blodwen have left. Perhaps we will take them to see the troupe of 25 midgets that are touring the country and are performing here on Wednesday evening. Aunt Eliza has invited us to her house for the same evening.

We have not had any letters from Douglas and Evelyn for some weeks. Hope they are all well. The children are no doubt back at school in Kimberley again.

Aunt Emmie is looking forward to going to England by the Stirling Castle in August.

Lots of love to all as though named.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I am commencing my letter early again as I anticipate having a number of meetings to attend during the early part of the week. I think I must commence by giving some extracts from a letter received from Douglas last Friday – ten days after it was written – giving some account of their Easter doings. Joe was with them from Good Friday to the following Thursday “full of beans”, Arthur and his two chums cycled up from Kimberley and had a frightful trip against the wind and in sand. They were to have slept at the Magistrate’s house at Taungs but as they got there so late, slept in the veldt. They each had a rug and coat. It was a good experience for them. Arthur arrived fresher than his pals and danced round like a two year old after their arrival. We met them at Scholtzfontein and Joe, Lynne and Rex rode their bikes to here (Grass Ridge) and the three boys came with us. Lynne’s pal enjoyed her stay too and if the noise is any criterion, they all had a good time. The six Metcalf children and Tiger Neville (Tiger Kloof) came to Cicely’s birthday and slept here the night so by means of mental arithmetic, you will see the crowd we had to sleep, Leslie, Gwen, Geo and Donald Hyno.

Frank and Irene and Arthur Collen and others were here for the evening, went down to Eric’s on Saturday and returned on Sunday having stuck in the mud. The general exodus took place yesterday. Arthur and his two chums biked to Pudimoe and I took the rest to Vryburg and after visiting two farms to fix up my cattle, went on to Pudimoe to pick up Evelyn. We slept at Mike Meyers after spending the evening at Eric’s. Freda seems OK. Beryl is teaching her three children. Eric looks fatter to me and is settling down nicely. They are busy preparing for a visit from Owen and Kate Collett. Beryl will return with them.

Joe and Blodwen and the children arrived by the early train on Wednesday. They had had three nights in the train. They have enjoyed their holiday and are looking very well. They visited Louis Botha House. Mr Fox, who took my job, taught Joe when he was apprenticed at Kimberley. The world is indeed very small. Old John and Rufus (two of the staff whilst I was at LBH, are still there. Many alterations and improvements have been made since my term of office. Of course not having the car, we have not been able to get about as we generally do. The children were interested in the animals in the park etc. We spent one evening at Aunt Eliza’s and played Lexicon. They had their photographs taken by Mr Lidbetter and the proof comes out very nicely. It will make a nice companion picture to Reg and Dot’s. I am glad they saw Aunt Emmie and Joyce, also Rev and Mrs Jennings, whilst at Cape Town. Blodwen was free of hay fever whilst there. All of them are looking very well. We measured the children and find they have grown from two to three inches since last Easter when they were here. We made good use of the pianola and I was able to play the accompaniment for Blodwen as she knew quite a number of the songs. Aunt Eliza had morning tea with us one day and Mary spent part of one evening with us. They left by the early train on Saturday morning for Bloemfontein. Hope they will find the house in order and that Ginger (the dog) safe and sound, also the fowls.

We are glad to hear better news from Dot. She says she has not had malaria but a severe cold, never has had such a bad one. She speaks of resuming her tennis. Reg has also had a bad cold but did not have to lie up for it. Norman is thrilled with his school and was proud to show his parents over it. Alan is leaning a lot from him too.

Later. Wednesday. Yesterday afternoon we heard that Miss Soloman, President of the Congregational Union, was in town. She gave an address in the Coloured church last evening. We went and had an interesting chat with her after the service. She is motoring all over the country. She is wonderful for her age. She must be nearer 80 than 70.

Denis passes through here by the night train tomorrow so we shall not see him. Hope to do so on his return trip.

Glad to hear from Joe and Blodwen that they found their house in order on their return. The landlord had done some painting etc. and Joe had got a bit of garden in order whilst

Blodwen had been away. Ginger (the dog) was very excited when Joe went to fetch him from a friend who had been looking after him.

Mom has a touch of backache today but I hope a porous plaster will do all that is necessary. Otherwise we are both keeping well. I am still sleeping out. Hope we shall hear from all of you by today's post.

Lots of love to all from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

The news of the week is that we are sorry to hear that Grace has been down with gastric flu and had to keep to her bed for some days. Ted has kept us informed almost daily regarding her progress and we are glad to know that the doctor allowed her to get up at the end of last week. We hope to hear continued good news before I post this.

Dot too has made a good recovery but from all accounts, is very thin and washed out. Reg too has had a bad cold. I suggest that both of the girls come here for a rest cure. Both are very busy in their various ways.

Douglas reports that Evelyn has not been well but was better. How about all of them coming down? All are welcome.

We are glad to hear that Reg's boy, Piet, is better. It is nice to hear that the electric light is to be switched on in Potgietersrus in the near future. I don't suppose it will be an economical proposition to use it for cooking etc.

You will be sorry to hear that Dudley Townshend has been laid up with boils in each ear. He has been away from work for some day and had to consult a specialist. It must have been very painful. Latest reports up to the time of writing (Monday evening) are that he hopes to resume his duties shortly.

Perhaps some of you will remember the Billingshams who took over Garret Brown & Co's business in Vryburg. He died there years ago. Now we hear that his widow has just passed away. She was a Miss Webber of Cradock. One of her daughters married Arthur Knowles, now at John Orr & Co.

George Collett was here Monday afternoon for a few minutes. Mrs W T Brown was in his car and could not come in as she was in a hurry to get back to the farm. Mr W T Brown had had a slight stroke I understand.

We had our first fire this (Monday) evening. We have not registered frost yet but it is pretty cold at nights. Last year we had our first fire on May 18<sup>th</sup>. We have our wood room full from the trees which were chopped down after the storm.

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>. Fifty years ago today I arrived in Cradock. What a lot of history has been enacted since then. Truly we have much to be thankful for.

On Friday afternoon, Mom and I went back with Aunt Jessie and Iris to Fish River for the weekend. We had not seen Uncle Herbert since his birthday (Feb 14<sup>th</sup>). He has kept to his bed for months now except he sits in a chair in his room to take nourishment. He cannot sit up in bed owing to his belt etc. He is as calm and patient as ever. Sleeps a great deal and lives almost entirely on slops. He is not able to have his teeth in. He is getting very thin but is quite interested in his farm and generally what goes on. Of course he is not able to control things and Uncle Jack is there every day to see to the work. He says he is not suffering much pain but when it does come on, they give him medicine which relieves it at once. It was Uncle Walter's 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday on Sunday and Herbert wanted him to come down to dinner but as he had company, he came afterwards. Uncles Gervase and Jack were also there in the afternoon and of course, Aunt Jessie and Agnes, so there were six out of the family of 12 together, and three of the in-laws. Uncle Walter seemed very well and bright and lively. Uncle Herbert was very pleased to see them. I read a good deal to him and enjoyed conversations. He would like me to read to him every day. He had very good nights whilst we were there. How long he is likely to last no one can say. His vitality is wonderful. I shall not be surprised if he continues on like this for months. On the other hand, the nurses think the cold weather may affect him. He had 2 hot water bottles continually about him. I took out with me a copy of the official Coronation services. It is beautifully got up and if any of you would like copies, Ernest has them at the bookshop, price 2/- each, plus 2 pence postage. They are worth keeping. The whole of the service is included and those who have wireless sets will be able to follow it as the whole service

is to be broadcast from 11.15 to about 3.30 on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Uncle Gervase and Aunt Jessie brought us home on Sunday afternoon and stayed to the evening service. It was Missionary Sunday and they quite enjoyed it. After service, Mom and I listened in to a Methodist service broadcast from Birmingham. The preacher was Rev Carter. He dealt with the unemployed and kindred subjects. He was very emphatic on the peace question.

I have had the job of walking all over the town lately examining the state of the streets for the Town Council with a view of necessary repairs and tarring of same. I have not finished yet. It is the Council's intention to tar all the streets in town. I miss my car for this sort of work. There is a considerable amount of work in connection with Council meetings. For instance, one day last week my programme was as follows:- 6 am, early coffee by 6.15. Inspected a part of the commonage by car before breakfast. Council committee meetings from 9 to 12 and again from 2.20 to 5 pm. Church finance committee 5.30 to 6.15 pm and evening service from 7.30 pm. Needless to say, every day is not so crowded but it is all interesting. I fail to see how any one in business can give the time to all such detail work.

Thursday of next week is the Fish River Fete. Uncle Herbert will be greatly missed on that occasion. I hope they have a fine day. Ernest has offered to take us out (I sharing the cost of petrol). Last year they raised £165 for church funds.

We have had very interesting letters from Arthur and Rex written from boarding school in Kimberley. They both seem very happy there and are doing very well. Rex hopes to take his matric in three years. Lynne is also in Kimberley, staying at Beit House where Dot was at school. We are hoping that they will be able to come and stay with us some time but of course the great attraction in the holidays is that Arthur came seventh out of 31 and Rex 19<sup>th</sup> also out of 31. We have not heard from Lynne yet.

Douglas writes that he is trucking 40 head of cattle for export and of course hopes to do well with them. He is buying some stock for Joe who is letting them run on Eric's farm on shares. Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate are at Eric's at present. Douglas hopes to see something of them. It is Beryl's birthday in a few days time.

Ruth has sent us a very nice large size photo of Denis. He is a handsome young man. Hope he is enjoying his trip to SWA. He should keep a diary. Wednesday morning, 6.30. With reference to the Coronation programme, I find that the copies are getting short so have sent a copy to each of you by this post. If you like to pay for same, so well and good. I hope you will keep them.

Yesterday afternoon I met Mr Dodd and Nessie in the street. They were all well. They went to Cape Town for some weeks at Xmas and have recently been to Middelburg (Cape) for a month as May's husband has been transferred from Umtata to Grootfontein School of Agriculture in the soil erosion department. They are very pleased to have her so much nearer them. Nessie says her son, who is home from Kingswood, thinks there is no place on earth like Kingswood. He is getting on very nicely there.

Our Town Council meeting was not over until nearly half past ten. It was quite an interesting meeting. Before dinner, today, I am to go with the health officer to inspect some of the dairies outside the Municipal area. This has to be done quarterly. It gives me a little run into the country for a few hours which is enjoyable.

A postcard from Ted yesterday says Grace was up for a little on Saturday but was glad to get back to bed again. Miss Hicks was still helping them. The children were at Pearces for the weekend. We hope to have better news today. We have not heard from Dot since her usual weekly letter last week. So we hope she is getting on.

Blodwen has sent us a sample pound of rusks which she buys in Bloemfontein at 9 pence a pound whereas we pay 1/3d here for same. We shall get our next lot from there by agricultural parcels (11 pounds weight for 1/-).

Tomorrow Mom is going to morning tea at Mrs van Rensburg's to attend a United Party meeting of Ladies. Mom is busy knitting some under garment for herself at present. She gets out most afternoons in the sun for a walk. Our grapefruit does not seem to be doing too well this

season. It is ripening very slowly and the fruit is much smaller than last year. It is more prolific. We are looking forward to enjoying it for breakfast. I forget if I mentioned that Uncle Gervase and Aunt Jessie stayed to supper on Sunday evening and that Mary and Dorothy also popped in to see if we were back from Fish River and also had supper with us. We are getting our weekly supply of butter from Uncle Bertie and this gives us the pleasure of seeing some of the members of Spelmanskop family weekly.

The Council decided last night to plant Bree Street with Jacaranda, Karijyong, and Flamboyant trees alternatively at distances of about 40 ft apart. There was a proposal to take out the big trees in Church Street, leading up to the front of the Dutch Reform Church but this was not agreed to.

I guess I have wearied you enough for this week with a two page letter. Will ring off and get to breakfast. Should any late news come, will add separately. By the way, I notice the wireless news in English is now broadcast at quarter to 7 in the evenings instead of quarter to 8. I always listen in at 7 am. I wish this Spanish war would stop.

Love Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1937  
Dot's birthday

My dear All,

I must confine my letter this week to one sheet, not that anyone has complained that last week I sent you too much. But the fact is that I have to go out inspecting dairies again this (Tuesday) afternoon and have to attend another meeting this evening that as I have remarked so often before "time is few".

We hope you all have written to Dot for her birthday. I do like you to keep up these annual events by remembering them one and another. We were very sorry to hear of Norman's accident when they broke a pane of glass and some of it fell on his face, cutting him rather badly. Hope no permanent disfigurement has resulted. We are relieved to hear that Dot is decidedly better. Grace too is reported better but still very weak and not able to perform her usual activities. I still hope she will be able to come away for a while for a rest. I know mothers are not easily spared away from home.

Joe writes that Ginger does not want to stay at home anymore. Since their return from holiday, he has fetched the dog twice from the house where he was being looked after and each time he has gone back again to it so Joy is letting him stay there. I did not report on the growth of the children. It was just a year since they were here last and we measured them against the wall in our bathroom. Merle was 32¼ then, now she is 36¼ and Roy was 36¼ and is now 39 inches tall. Joe has sent us a copy of the photo they had taken of themselves and children when here. It is very good indeed. Hope all of you have had a copy.

I think I told you last week of our visit to Uncle Herbert. Whilst we were there, they suggested that we might hire one of Uncle's houses at the station which has been occupied by a school teacher for some time and has now left. It is a large place with a good deal of ground round it – just opposite the shop. It would, of course, be nice to be so near to all of the friends about there but I fear it would be too lonely. No electric light or other conveniences.

On May the first, two things happened – neither of them of great importance – but interesting. I commenced going through my box of snaps and other photos. It is going to be a big job sorting them out but I am doing it in a systematic manner. I have some dozens of very large used envelopes which I have numbered and am sorting photos into these as far as I can classify them. When the sorting of them is done, the job will be to stick them into appropriate albums. It is a very interesting job but will keep me busy for a long time. I suppose I have over 100 negatives without prints. I will probably get prints made so as to see if they are worth keeping. Where I find I have duplicates, I shall distribute them amongst those who are interested. We started using our grapefruit on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The fruit is much smaller than last year and not so juicy but quite nice.

Denis is having a good time in Windhoek. Ruth sent us one of his letters to read. The people he is staying with seem very kind. He has done very well in his class again. He is first out of 63 scholars. He is evidently keeping up his reputation for being top of the class.

The last week has been a busy one for me as in addition to numerous committee meetings and council meetings, I have been out with the Municipal Inspector examining the dairies outside the Municipal area. It is quite interesting and necessary to see how these places are kept from a health point of view. Needless to say, some are much better than others. At one of these places we were told by the owner that he is selling his kraal manure to the Western Province farmers. He reckons he has one thousand truck loads and he clears £1 per load. He has four motor lorries riding on the manure to the siding and they get away 14 truck loads a day. The carriage to the Western Province amounts to £4.15 per truck so it costs the receiver about six pounds per truck.

Last Sunday was S.S. Anniversary. In the afternoon Uncle Dudley and Aunt Katie and Joanie came in unexpectedly to supper and stayed the night with us. They and we quite enjoyed

the visit. The services were also very good. I enclose copy of the hymns sung. All are to be found in the Methodist hymn book.

Wednesday morning. I have to go out inspecting at ten and have a Location Committee at 12 noon and we are going to Fish River in the morning so I have not much time left for writing. We are posting early today as it is a public holiday tomorrow. I do not think of anything else to record and hope we shall have good news in all the letters when they come later on in the day. We are both well and hope you all are as well. The weather is remarkably mild the last week and it looks as though we might get rain.

Love from Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday May 12<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

I am writing on Tuesday morning so as to be in time to post early as tomorrow, being Coronation Day, I do not expect there will be any post collected. In addition to which I expect we shall be busy in one way and another with the local programme. Not that our celebrations are likely to be very grand as our Mayor is not at all an enthusiastic loyal subject. However we shall see.

We are disappointed in not receiving many letters last week. Dot was the only one who wrote. We are glad she was able to report improvements all round so far as health is concerned. They have gone in for a wireless set but do not expect to have it installed in time to get the Coronation Service so will listen in at Mike's. There is considerable dissatisfaction in the Transvaal, especially in the new arrangements in the way broadcasting is being carried out. Bilingualism is spoiling everything and the Chairman of the Department refuses to alter matters.

We hear through Aunt Emmie that Eric Fear has been on the lookout for a stray lion that has appeared in their neighbourhood and has naturally caused a great deal of fear amongst the Fear family – excuse the pun. We have not heard of its being shot or having devoured any of the children or stock.

We had a letter card from Aunt Kate Owen saying they had spent a very enjoyable visit to Douglas and Evelyn. She does not give any idea as to when they are returning to Redlands.

We are hoping to hear that Grace is better but must take no news as good news. No doubt she has lots of sewing etc to do for the family as winter is approaching. Not that we have had any cold weather here except the first few days of winter when we had a fire. These have been unnecessary for a long time. In fact I find two blankets unnecessarily hot sleeping out.

On Monday we had letter from Blodwen saying that all her teeth have to come out as the doctor thinks they may be the cause of some of her trouble. If it is not the teeth, it may be kidney or appendix that is the cause. We hope it is nothing serious.

From England we hear that Uncle Willie's son, Phil, has lost his wife. She has always been very delicate. We are very sorry for them all.

I was nearly forgetting to tell you about the Fish River Fete last Thursday. Ernest and Alison took Mom and I out in their car. It was a perfect day so far as the weather was concerned and also a very satisfactory one so far as the financial result is concerned. £250 was raised. The New Hall built as a memorial to Uncle Herbert was used for the first time for the purpose of the fete and was most satisfactory. There must have been between sixty and seventy cars and crowds of people from all over the district. Of course Uncle Herbert could not be there but some of us went down to see him. He was very interested in all the arrangements and gave instructions as to what had to be done etc. There were over 20 springbucks shot and sold besides some live sheep. The lunch served in the new hall was very nice. Everything except the potatoes were served cold and there was heaps of it. Probably more than 150 people sat down to lunch (2/- a head). I bought six legs of venison for Mrs Derecourt (from whom we get our dinners) and others. Willie Saunders, senior, made a number of articles for sale, such as towel hangers, dust pans, etc. which sold well. We took out a quantity of grapefruit for sale – in fact everybody did their bit. It was a most enjoyable day all round. By the way, would any of you like a pocket of grapefruit, if so, say so and we will send some along. It might not be worth it if you can get it locally as the carriage might be too heavy.

We have not heard when Denis is returning nor have we heard any definite arrangements for the school holidays in June. They will soon be here now. Next month we shall pass the shortest day. I should like to see the Vryburg Show but do not expect it will materialise.

I am getting on slowly with the sorting of the photographs. It is an interesting but slow job.

As showing the interest Uncle Herbert still takes in things, they phoned in on Monday asking me to send out some flags and red, white and blue crinkled paper to decorate his bedroom for the Coronation. He has also insisted upon the children of the neighbourhood having a fancy dress dance in the hall on Friday in honour of the Coronation. He is so thoughtful of other people. He has not been at all well this week.

Later. Tuesday afternoon. No letters from any of the family today so will close now and post this afternoon. There will not be any delivery of letters for us until Thursday.

Much love from  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

How is one to describe the wonderful events of Coronation Day? Our local celebrations were nothing much to write home about as the saying goes. They were successful as far as they went and there was a big gathering of children in the park for the united service in the morning. Each school child received a medal and a box of chocolates and in the afternoon, were entertained to a free bioscope show. The park was decorated as far as possible and quite a number of flags were hoisted in the business part of the town. A little rain fell early in the morning but fortunately held off until the afternoon. The Native and Coloured function was to some extent spoilt owing to rain and a very cold wind. Fortunately, having no official part to take in the celebrations, I cleared off before the rain began and got home dry. In the evening I went to a dinner at the Victoria Hotel, not that I was particularly hungry, but to show that there was no ill feeling between the two white races. The function was spoilt before the meal was over by the sudden tragedy of the Proprietress of the hotel dropping down dead in the kitchen. Fortunately one of the local doctors was at the dinner and at once did what he could but he could not restore her. The company then dispersed. We shall be interested in hearing how your local events went off. Of course we listened in to the broadcast service from Westminster Abbey. The reception was very good on the whole. The King's response to the various vows he was called upon to take were quite audible. The Empire's tribute from all over the world was distinctly heard as was also the King's speech in the evening. I also listened in later in the evening to the description of the procession from Westminster to Buckingham Palace. It was all very interesting and too wonderful. How I would have liked to have been there. However, I expect we heard more of the ceremony than a good many of the people who were in the Abbey itself. When the next coronation comes along, no doubt you younger generation will be able to see the whole of the affair by means of television. It was past one am before I went to bed. Mom did not stay up so late. Uncle Herbert wanted the young folk at Fish River to have some share in the festivities and so a fancy dress dance was arranged for them for Friday evening. They phoned in asking me to send out some flags and decorations so as to decorate his bedroom. They had service at Fish River on Sunday and he seemed much brighter. It is wonderful how patient he is. Never complains.

Winter has come at last. For four days in succession the maximum temperature dropped ten degrees. We registered our first frost on Monday.

Ernest has been measuring the front of this house with a view of erecting a sort of pagoda so that we can get roses or runners of some kind to grow over it and so provide shade in the summer. I prefer a veranda but Aunt Letty (to whom the property belongs) does not like them so we must be satisfied with what we can get. They are going to put it along the whole frontage.

I have reckoned up what the improvements have cost me since we came here in October 1934. It amounts to £78.6.6d, of this amount £34 odd worth of improvements I could remove if ever we decided to build or took another place. It is surprising how it mounts up. Of course I should not have spent so much except for the fact that it was helping Aunt Letty and she has no other source of revenue except the rents she gets for this and next door.

You will be sorry and surprised to hear that Mary has resigned her position as Nurse in the Location. I cannot go into details at present but we are all very sorry about it.

My typewriter is not behaving itself at all well today and is constantly tearing the paper so I will ring off and put in new carbon for next week and hope for the best.

We are both well and hope to hear good news of you all in due course.

The Church birthday party was a success and brought in over £16. We saw Denis as he passed through on his way home on Tuesday night. He has enjoyed his holiday immensely and hopes to get an account of same published in the Outspan.

Lots of love to all as though named, Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday May 26<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

Those of you who have a wireless set will be interested in knowing that on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> at four pm there will be broadcast a talk from the Kruger National Park which will include a demonstration of the actual noises caused by animals in the park. I think it was Joe who first suggested this demonstration some years ago. I hope it will come over the air nicely.

I am subscribing to Punch this year. The first number to arrive is the Coronation issue. It is very good and I am going to send it round each week as it arrives so that all of you may have the pleasure of a good laugh. It will go to Joe first, then to Grace, then Dot and Douglas. Ruth, I expect, sees it at the library in Grahamstown but if not, then Douglas can send it to her. I will enquire. I have removed the advertisements as they only increase the weight and postage. I am not insisting on any of you contributing towards the cost except to pay the postage from one to another. Please do not keep any issue longer than a week.

The photo I sent round of Denis and Reg and Dot's group have been very favourably commented upon. The photo of Denis arrived back from Evelyn yesterday but the group of Dot's has not come. Whoever has it, please do the needful and return it.

On Saturday morning Mom and I went out to Fish River for the long weekend. We would have gone by car on Friday but Aunt Jessie and Iris brought one of the nurses and a native in so there was not room. It was a job to catch the train at a few minutes past seven. Matilda (our maid) came early so as to get breakfast and wash up before we left. The taxi came early so as to pick up any passengers who might arrive by the train. So I sent Mom on with the luggage whilst I stayed to do the locking up etc. and then walked over. There was not much time to spare. The sun does not rise before seven now. Aunt Jessie had saved breakfast for us so we did very well. We found Uncle Herbert very weak indeed. He is quite conscious and is pleased to see us. He cannot talk for long and drops off to sleep frequently. I was pleased to read to him. Amongst some of the verses I read were six verses which my mother had sent to me on 1.5.1890. They were so appropriate to his condition. He asked if she had composed them. Early on Sunday morning he had a bad retching attack which left him very exhausted, so much so that we thought the end was quite near. However he revived again and had a better night on Monday. We left by train on Monday evening arriving home about 10.30. I took a few tools out with me and was able to do a few little jobs for Aunt Jessie. The telephone has always been too high to be convenient for short people so I lowered it a couple of inches. The kitchen door lock has been out of order for years but by taking parts of three old locks, I managed to get it fixed better than it was.

Douglas wrote saying he has secured a contract for drilling for the Railway. Hope it will be a profitable business as a side line to his farming. We have not heard from others this week owing to Monday being a public holiday. Next week will be the same. We have not made any plans for Union Day holiday.

I have enquired from the railway regarding cost of tickets to Durban. We have not heard when Grace and family intend going but if we do go, I want to go via Port Elizabeth and then boat to Durban and return by rail via Kroonstad and Bloemfontein. The round trip will cost £10.1.3d each, second class. I have written to Mr Irons Sr to enquire cost of accommodation at Doonside.

Dorothy said in her last letter that they had got the electric light laid on to their house and the Church for which they are very pleased. Potgietersrus will be worth living in now.

I always try to listen in on Wednesday mornings at 10.15 to hear Rev Jacques of Grahamstown conduct family prayers. He is worth listening to. Other days are also good.

Have had a very busy time over Council work lately, over eight hours some days. Last night was council meeting and it was not over till 10.30. Mary wants to give up her work by the

end of August. There was a lot of discussion about it last night. Another Committee is to go into the matter tomorrow.

The pain in my arm is not troubling me much now. I have been taking crusions? for some time. Hope you are all well and that we shall have letters tomorrow from you.

Lots of love from

Dad

53a Bree Street, Craddock  
Sunday May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear Children

This is an extra letter which I hope will not cause you any undue anxiety. There is really no need for that but at the same time it would not be right of me to keep you in ignorance of the position.

For some time past I have had suspicions that my heart and water works were not functioning as correctly as they should. On Wednesday last, I went to our doctor to be overhauled. He says the heart is not diseased but the muscles are not functioning as well as they should and I must be careful not to overdo my strength. Avoid straining, walking up hills, worry, or undue excitement etc. My blood pressure is 160 whatever that may mean. He does not consider it excessive for my age and the altitude here. He examined me carefully for any trace of appendicitis or similar troubles. He suspects that the prostate gland is not functioning as it should but he does not detect anything malignant. Mom did not go with me so we get him down here yesterday afternoon to talk the matter over.

As you know, we have felt very lonely here, not having any of you nearby and I have been thinking that perhaps if we shifted to Vryburg, it would be beneficial. You see Douglas seems to be the most settled of any of you and we should probably see him and some of the family at least once a week. Grace and Ted might be shifted anywhere and the same with Joe and Blodwen. Reg and Dot are far away north and at a shank end, if I may say so. The attitude of various places are as follows: Craddock 2855, Vryburg 3893, Bloemfontein 4568, Kroonstad 4491, Potgietersrus 3865, Grahamstown 1746, Kimberley 4012, Middelburg 4095, Pretoria 4593, Johannesburg 5735.

Doctor said that undoubtedly my heart would work easier at a lower altitude but he did not say or think it was necessary to make a change in that direction at present. He would not consider it wise to permanently reside in a higher altitude than this. The climatic conditions of Craddock he thought were as suitable as most places. He preferred East London to Port Elizabeth as being a milder climate and far less hilly. We pointed out that Mom did not like the sea as it generally gave her rheumatism. We discussed the proposed visit to Durban south coast for the holidays with Grace, Ted and family. He thought that if we did undertake it, it would be wisest to go by boat rather than rail so as to avoid the Drakensburg mountains. He did not say that it would be dangerous from a health point of view but simply it would be well to avoid risks. He also said that we need not prohibit ourselves from visiting our children from time to time. Asked regarding diet or treatment or even an operation, he did not consider anything was necessary. He could find no trace of diabetes.

We are still considering going to Durban but do not yet know when Grace and family are going. Mrs Irons has written that she can get a suitable room for us next door to them for £2.10s per month. We could also have meals at her house with Grace and Co. That sound very nice and if we do go, shall certainly take advantage of it. There is one consideration which weighs with us considerably is Uncle Herbert's protracted illness. So long as he is living, we do not like to be far away. It is nothing less than marvellous how he has lasted. Aunt Jessie was in town on Friday and had dinner with us as usual and said he was much brighter again. By the way, it was her birthday yesterday.

I do not know that I need to add more. You know the position and trust you will not worry about us. We are in good hands and are quite contented to live a day at a time.

I might also say that the acute pain I get in the small of my back from time to time Doctor attributed to lumbago and advised rubbing with some embrocation.

Aunt Eliza came down before service this evening to enquire what report the doctor had given. It was very kind of her. Mary had supper with us this evening. Our maid has not turned up today but we have managed quite all right. Our dinner was sent to us.

I am posting this tonight in the hope that you will get same on Wednesday.

With very dear love to you all, yours ever, Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1937

My dear All,

You will not expect a long letter from me today as I sent a "special edition " on Sunday.

I am sorry to say that Aunt Eliza had a nasty fall after leaving us on Sunday evening. We parted at our gate, she going home round the corner of Cross Street (as we always go that way) and we went the other way direct to church. This was a few minutes to seven. Aunt Eliza did say that the street lights were not on in her street when she came down. It was still daylight then. Next morning when I went to see her, I was surprised to learn that shortly after turning the corner, she put her foot into a hole and fell. She had her best coat and hat on. The lights in that street had not come on nor had they in Market Street. However she got home safely in the dark. Unfortunately she bruised her arm and the shaking was not good for her. As a rule, she never goes out in the evenings but on this occasion, she was anxious to know what the Doctor had reported re myself. Yesterday morning she had the misfortune to scald her left arm. Let us hope there will not be any complications. We saw her last evening and she appeared to be alright.

I wonder if any of you listened in to the broadcast from Kruger National Park the other afternoon. We had very good reception and quite enjoyed it. We see by the newspapers that the overseas reception was not too good. Some day I hope to go and see the Park again.

A special edition from Dot received yesterday gave the pleasing announcement of Trixie being engaged to a Mr Tyson of Johannesburg. I think I know his father in Kimberley.

Aunt Eliza received an air mail letter yesterday from Agnes Williams announcing her marriage to her cousin in Wales.

I notice Ted's name appears in a recent issue of the Methodist Churchman in connection with his S.S. anniversary. Am glad to hear it was such a success.

Douglas reports that Kingsley rode at the Vryburg Show but was not successful in gaining a prize. I should have loved to have seen him. Uncle Owen was judging at the Show there. Douglas sold some of his oxen at the Show for £12.7.6d. each, a jolly good price considering the animals were not stall fed. This shows what good veldt he has. We are sorry to hear that Mrs Geard has had a couple of strokes recently.

It is just 7.40 and the sun has just risen. We shall soon be past the shortest day (21<sup>st</sup>). We have only registered frost once this winter on my thermometer but of course we have frost on the ground most nights.

Matilda has been away sick since Saturday afternoon. This does not lighten our share of the household work. She sent along yesterday to say she had a bad cough. We sent her some food. Old Mrs Trollip (86) and Gladys Norman had dinner with us yesterday. Mrs Derecourt kindly sends it along. Today if Matilda does not turn up, we will go to Mrs Derecourt's and have our dinner there and so save sending it.

We are pleased to hear that Reg and Dot have got a wireless set and are getting good reception. Now they have electric light in the home, they must be quite set up. We are also glad to see that she is so much better that she was able to go to Pietersburg to play in a tennis tournament recently. Keep it up. Grace is looking forward to playing at the Post Office courts as soon as she is feeling better.

I am sending each of you a copy of the Midland News containing a report of a recent meeting of the Council. Mary has definitely decided to give up at the end of August or sooner if she can be relieved of her work. I could say a good deal more than appeared in the paper but that will give some idea of what has happened.

I wonder if you remember me collecting the bound volumes of the Wesleyan Minutes of Conference. I had them in Vryburg and Cape Town. I have recently been able to sell them to the Witwatersrand University Library for £5. When we were at Fish River recently, it was suggested that we might hire the house at the station where there used to be a school. We had a look at it but it does not appeal to us as there is no electric light and most of the floors are

cement. It would be far too lonely. Of course it would be nice being so much nearer to the family circle but there are other considerations to be taken into account.

Later. We have just had breakfast 8.55. It is nice and warm in the lounge.

I have cut out all the pictures of the Coronation from the Cape Times and they make a very interesting collection.

I do not expect we shall get any letters from you today owing to Monday having been a holiday. We did not go anywhere. Hope you all are well.

Love from Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I am starting my letter on Tuesday afternoon as we do not know but we may receive news of Uncle Herbert's passing away. We went out this morning with Rev Weavers in his car. I was arranging to go to Port Elizabeth yesterday and phoned to Aunt Jessie in the morning to enquire how Uncle was. Nurse said she thought it would be alright if I was not away more than a day or so. About seven in the evening, Fenner Moorcroft came in from Fish River and brought a message from Aunt Jessie asking me not to go as Uncle was so very weak that they thought he could not last very much longer. So of course I put off my trip. I mentioned it to Rev Weavers and he suggested going out there this morning. I am glad we did go. Mom and Mrs W also went. We found Uncle very low but he was able to talk a little. He said he was not longer for this world but was anxious about those he was leaving behind. Nurse says he is much worse. Doctor saw him on Sunday and says the end may come at any time. His pulse is still strong but that he says it may cease at any time. I am glad we went as I was able to complete the necessary arrangements for telegraphing and phoning to the relatives and friends when the end does come. We cannot hope for it to be long delayed now. Everything is ready as far as it can be. The funeral is to take place at the cemetery at the station. We were back again in time for dinner but unfortunately Mom got the feelings of car sickness (was not actually sick). She did not eat any dinner and is feeling much better now (4 pm).

I am glad to say that Aunt Eliza seems none the worse for her fall and accident to her arm.

Letters from Joe indicate that he is again contemplating buying a house in Bloemfontein. He has made one offer of £900 but same has been declined. Grace reports that Miss Hicks, who has been helping her for some time with her sewing etc. was motoring to her home recently when the rear wheel came off. Fortunately there was no serious damage to her person. Grace and family look to go to Doonside about the end of this month. The Children are naturally very excited about it. As things are at present, I do not entertain the idea of joining them. We should like the trip but think we must cry it off this time. They are going by car in easy stages. The car is being overhauled for the trip. Grace reports that Rev and Mrs Jennings have been in Kroonstad. Evidently Mrs Jennings must be considerably better since she left Cradock.

Have you read Ruth's article in the Outspan of June 4<sup>th</sup>? It is very good.

Two interesting pieces of news have come to hand this week. First Dot informed us that Trixie is engaged to Alison Tyson, son of a Kimberley family. We have had a characteristic letter from her in response to our congratulations. Then Aunt Eliza received a letter by airmail announcing the marriage of Agnes Williams to her cousin in Wales.

Mr Libetter took us for a spin one afternoon as we were out for a walk. It was kind of him. He stayed to supper with us afterwards.

Wednesday morning, Mom is better. It is the coldest morning we have had so far. I still sleep outside and so far have kept free of colds.

Uncle Jack has asked me to make all the arrangements for the funeral. I have a list of relatives and friends to whom I am to wire to and others to phone to. It is probable all the brothers and sisters will be present. We believe Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate are back from Vryburg. I have everything all ready. Our maid, Matilda, does not come before 7.30 or even later sometimes but she works very well.

Joe says that Roy noticed him in his dress shirt and remarked that it looked like the front of his car when the wind blows through. He noticed the pleats in his shirt which reminded him of the ribs of the radiator. Some child that.

Mary, we understand, will go to Louisvale when she leaves her location work. She hopes to be free about the end of July.

Wednesday afternoon. Letters from Grace, Dot and Joe to hand. It appears that Joe has bought a house for £950. It seems a very nice place from the description. We shall want to see it. Grace reports ten degrees of frost last week. Mrs Dingle writes that her house (the old Mission house at Vryburg) is to let at £7.10s per month. I am not taking it at that.

Much love to all

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I have not been able to start my letter before this a.m. owing to pressure of other duties in connection with the passing over of Uncle Herbert. As you will have gathered from recent letters, it was not expected that he could last much longer. It is simply wonderful how he has survived but evidently his constitution was remarkably good.

On Saturday, we heard that he was worse and the end might be expected at any time. We arranged that either one or the other would be at home in case of phone messages coming over. However, on Sunday evening we both went to church as usual and during the service, I was called out and Mom followed me. Jack had sent Hilton in to fetch the coffin as it was quite evident the end was near. He expected that Uncle would have gone by the time he got home again. We did not go back into church but I waited outside and informed Ernest and the Rev Weavers etc. We had arranged that a clear day should elapse between Uncle's death and the funeral so as to allow relations and friends from a distance to be present. We did not hear any further news before we went to bed about ten so I slept inside as Mom would not be likely to hear the phone. About three minutes to midnight the phone went and Uncle Gervase informed me that the end had come at ten minutes past nine. The nurses had decided that it was best for the funeral to take place at three on Monday afternoon. However this was altered to four. They had phoned the death notice through to the Eastern Province Herald for that morning's issue of the paper. I had phoned to the Undertakers to ascertain if the body could not be embalmed so as to keep it a little longer and I also interviewed the doctor but it was decided to have the funeral as soon as possible.

I then got busy phoning to those who were available. Only a few offices are open all night but I managed to get through to Graaff Reinet and Alan Biggs informed the friends and relatives in that neighbourhood. Some days previously, I typed out all the telegrams that had to be sent to distant relatives leaving space blank for filling in the actual time. So I got busy filling in these so as to get them off as soon as the exchange was opened or it was reasonable to arouse the people. I then turned in for an hour of sleep but was up again at five and went to secure half a dozen wreaths which Uncle Gervase had asked me to order. All the street lights were out at midnight – in fact they were switched off whilst I was phoning. Returning, I called at the Poplars so that they could make their arrangements. I then started phoning all and sundry. This took me a solid two hours and more. To add to our work, Matilda did not turn up – and incidentally has not turned up yet. I had a snack of breakfast and was at the telegraph office a few minutes after nine and I hope all the friends got the messages quickly. I did not wire to all of you – only Douglas – as I knew you could not come to the funeral and it would only have added to the costs, which will be pretty considerable in any case. There was plenty still to arrange and the telephone was kept busy all the morning. Dulcie and her husband kindly offered to take us out and we left at two. We went straight to Saltpansdrift. The coffin had been taken up to the church at the station on Sunday night and placed in the church. (After breakfast. Evidently Matilda is not coming today.)

It was anticipated that there would be a crowd at the service so it was decided to hold same in Herbert's Memorial Hall. The coffin was transferred to the hall and suitably arranged with flowers. Being winter, these were very scarce and artificial and everlastings were also used. Unfortunately Uncle Walter was not feeling well enough to attend and Aunt Letty was too far away (Louisvale) and Uncle Owen and wife had not returned from their trip to Vryburg and Johannesburg. They are due back on Thursday. Aunt Rosa had gone for a holiday with one of her sons to Durban. All the other brothers and sisters were present. Seats from the church were brought into the hall but there was not nearly enough seats for the crowd that attended. It is estimated that at least three hundred people were there. Rev Weavers gave a most heartening address and Rev Malerbe (DR Church) also spoke very feelingly, in Afrikaans. The procession

from the hall to the cemetery was very long. Aunt Jessie walked with Mom and me followed by the brothers and sisters, in age order, then the nephews and nieces, also in age order and then the general public, and the farm hands brought up the rear. I am sending each of you a copy of Midland News which gives a very good report of the service etc. After the service was over, the brothers and sisters went down to the house where the attorney read Uncle's will. It is a lengthy document, with several codicils. The main facts are that the property has to be sold either by auction or by private treaty and his assets are to be divided amongst his brothers and sisters equally. He has provided a sum for bursaries for the Boys High School here, the Hospital, Methodist Church, his overseers and some of his old coloured servants. Uncle Jack and Mr Garlake are his executors. When the will has been filed with the Master of the Supreme Court, I will be able to send round a copy for your perusal. Aunt Jessie and Uncle Jack and Aunt Agnes will live at Saltpansdrift for the present at any rate. It is impossible, at this stage, to say when the estate will be wound up but a few months will elapse before the result will be known.

We got home very tired and were glad to get to bed and have a good night's rest. I think I have forgotten to say that Alice Biggs, Kathleen and her husband, Boy Vorster, and Denham Collett came over from Graaff Reinet. Denham slept with us and had breakfast next morning and returned home after dinner. Alice and Kathleen spent some time with us during the morning and enjoyed looking at photos and talking of old times. The total ages of the brothers and sisters is 840 odd making the average of each 71 years and three months. This I believe is a world record. The eldest is over 82 and the youngest is 58.

Aunt Jessie was in town yesterday and is very bright and greatly relieved after almost two years of Herbert's illness. Numbers of letters and telegrams are arriving which Aunt Jessie is attending to.

Mom caught a nasty cold on Friday last and spent all day Saturday in bed and only got up after breakfast on Sunday. She did not go out to meeting in the morning. It has been very awkward being without our servant during these days but we have managed to survive it. We hope she will be well enough to resume work very soon. Hilda George had morning tea with us today. Alex and George were at the funeral.

It is too soon to discuss plans for the future. I shall probably take a run down Port Elizabeth shortly. Further than that, I cannot see at present. We have been asked to join the croquet club in the park but it is in abeyance for the time being.

Joe has bought a house in Exton Road for £950 and he is able to pay off rather more than half and the balance he gets from a building society. He also insures his life with the Society and in the event of his passing out before the amount is paid off, the property is handed over free of debt. This is a very good arrangement.

Douglas has sent us a splendid set of snaps of his house. They are very interesting and beautifully taken. I think the family has seen them. He also sent a sympathetic telegram of condolence which I am sending on to Aunt Jessie.

It will be Arthur's birthday next week. Suppose he will be soon be looking forward to leaving school. Holidays commence next week. We wonder if any of Douglas' children will come this way. They are the only ones who have not been to see us.

I do not seem to be able to collect my thoughts to be able to write anymore this week but I know you will be anxious to hear about Uncle's passing away.

I must try to answer letters received (with thanks) recently a little later when I have more time to think.

Very much love to you all  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It seems only yesterday that I sent you two full sheets giving particulars regarding Uncle Herbert's death and funeral. Now a whole week has gone by. Today is the seventeenth anniversary of our eldest grandchild's birthday, Arthur Charles Butler. He is home for the holidays by now and I hope he is having a very happy day. I am writing this on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup>. He has some way to go before he leaves school, I suppose. I left Croydon School when I was 16½. I never sat for the J.C. or Matric examinations. I was too much of a dunce I fear for that. However, I have been learning something ever since and hope to continue doing so to the end of the chapter. It will be my brother, Willie's, 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Sunday next. Talking of birthdays, I have completed the Collett birthday record and am doing the Butler record in the same way. I have a large book ruled in three columns, one for births, marriages and deaths. It is most interesting. One strange fact has come to light and that is that August is not a popular month for marriages so far as the Collett family is concerned. Not a single marriage was celebrated in that month.

Numerous letters have come to hand expressing appreciation of Uncle's life and work. We appreciate the letters which have come from every one of the family. I am glad some, if not all, have written to Aunt Jessie.

I am glad to report that Matilda turned up (about nine) on Friday last after four days absence. We were greatly relieved. She was genuinely sick but seems better now and we hope will be able to continue. It does make a big difference when she is not here. I suppose it is useful experience for us but sometimes we seem to get more than we want. Douglas and Evelyn report that servants are very scarce in their parts. They also state that houses in Vryburg are very scarce. Grace and Ted have the same experience in Kroonstad. They are leaving on Saturday by car for the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of their holiday and look to get as far as Harrismith where they spend a day or so with relatives. They look to take about a week before reaching Doonside. That will be their postal address. Am glad to hear they have let their house for the month they will be away.

During Matilda's absence, we found it more convenient to go to our dinners than have them here. We prefer having them at home needless to say. We also find it an additional comfort in the cold mornings to cook our breakfast in the dining room as that room is so very cold in winter. The electric hot plate etc helps to make the room warmer.

It was fourteen years ago last week that Uncle James passed away. I remember the time very well. I was acting Town Clerk at Vryburg when I got the news. Ernest took Aunt Charlotte to Fish River for Uncle Herbert's funeral and got very car sick both going out and returning. Her elder brother was also there. He is very feeble also. Aunt has moved into a house next door to the school in front of us so we shall see more of one another. Our garden is very dreary. All the leaves are off the trees and our grapefruit is just about finished. The furrow water is so brack that it spoils most things that are touched by it. Grass Ridge dam is practically dry and farmers are calling out for increased storage in the river. Perhaps Government might buy Saltpan's drift and put that under water by making a big dam below Katkop.

Ethne's father and sister spent Saturday afternoon and Sunday with us. They were expecting Ethne to have been here. They came to attend a wedding of Ted Gilfillan's son. They left after dinner on Sunday. Jeffrey and a school chum went back with them in their lorry and will come home on their push bikes.

After breakfast. Our plans have not matured but we have asked Aunt Jessie if she would like to go with us as far as East London if we decide to go but we have not had a reply yet. We have also asked the Dodds if they would like to occupy this flat whilst we are away.

Wednesday morning. Aunt Jessie writes that she is going over to see Florrie at Graaff Reinet on Friday with Iris and her sister. In any case, you must please direct here as usual as if we do go, I always leave the address where to forward letters.

Mom has a stiff neck for a couple of days but it is better today. We generally go for a short walk about four and always have a fire in the lounge in the evenings. Town Council met last evening but it was over early. I am still sleeping out and enjoy it. Mary also sleeps out now that she has moved to a place where they have a veranda. She looks to go to Graaff Reinet as soon as she can leave. I see I have about filled my sheet so must stop. I hope there will be letters from you all today.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday June 30<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

Half the year gone already. We shall soon be making plans for Xmas I suppose. We are still here in Cradock. We have not been able to see far enough to plan our movements. We asked Aunt Jessie if she would like to go with us but she decided rather hurriedly to go to Graaff Reinet for the weekend. She returned to Fish River on Monday and we have not seen or heard from her since. Perhaps we may do so today. We are getting a real touch of winter this week. It has been very cold the last few nights. Grace reports it cold in Kroonstad and Joe says the taps were frozen in Bloemfontein. The children were thrilled with the icicles. It is terribly dry and Grass Ridge dam has had no run of water in it this season. Water for gardens has been restricted for a long time. The water that is in the furrow is so brack that it kills the fruit trees. The little patch of grass we had in front is apparently dead. We must see about having the vines and plumbago pruned as soon as possible. It has nearly covered the archway at the front gate.

We suppose that Grace, Ted and children are nearing Durban by now. They were leaving Kroonstad on Saturday morning. We do not expect to hear from them before they reach Doonside. Joe and Blodwen will not be moving into their own house before the first of August. Needless to say, they are very anxious to get settled. Blodwen was having the first section of three sittings for the extraction of all her teeth. We hope her general health will be greatly improved as a result. We shall be anxious to hear how she has got on so far.

I am sending round with this letter the article Ruth wrote about Aunt Eliza's museum, as she called it. I want it back please. It is quite interestingly written. By the way, Ruth is on the air this afternoon at five and again on Thursday July 1<sup>st</sup> and again on July 7<sup>th</sup> when she is to be the fairy godmother in the Children's Hour. Those of you who have wireless sets will try to listen in I hope.

On Saturday evening, Aunt Eliza gave an evening when Mrs Laws, mother of Mrs Clayton, was present and her grandson. She is very pleased with Cradock and says it agrees with her health. She will be returning to Cape Town next month I think.

The organ tuner who does the church organ was here this week. He had a look at the pianola and said it was a good instrument. He gave me several tips as to the working of same. He thinks it may want cleaning.

We had a letter from Mr Dodd yesterday saying that they cannot accept our offer to occupy our flat whilst we are away. Their daughter, May, is with them at present and other visitors from Cape Town.

Uncle Jack's daughter, Winnie, and her family and Harvey Brown's mother and sister from Scotland are going down to Kids beach next Tuesday and hope that we may be in East London at the same time. Nurse Edith Collett is also there and of course Mrs Hudson and Trixie. It would be nice to see them all.

We are sorry to hear that Denis has contracted chicken pox and is home from school for a few weeks. Ruth says he is very bright and cheerful. Ruth is excelling at bowls and is likely to play in the Eastern Province Championships at Port Elizabeth.

Alison's Joan had morning tea with us recently. She is home from the training college at Grahamstown. Guy is also home from University. We saw Barbara in town yesterday. She says Aunt Emmie was well when she left.

Aunt Kate Owen was sick when she got back from Vryburg and Johannesburg. They were sorry not have been back in time for Uncle Herbert's funeral. Uncle Owen will be coming to town shortly to attend some meeting in connection with the Grass Ridge dam. There is an agitation going on in the Midland News for the construction of another dam nearer town and it is thought that Government should buy Saltpansdrift and construct such below Katkop. If that was done, it would probably mean putting Saltpansdrift under water and shifting the railway station. Some job if ever it comes about.

Later. Letter from Blodwen saying she has had the first lot of teeth out and is feeling pretty rotten. No letters from any other member of the family today. Perhaps they will come tomorrow. It is delightful in the sunshine.

Aunt Emmie's time is getting short now. She looks to leave early in August for England. They have had such a tremendous lot of rain at the Cape during the winter that I am sure she will be glad to get away from it.

We generally get out for a short walk in the afternoons but there are not many places to visit. We sometimes go to the park but everything is dry and dreary until the Spring comes along.

We are both keeping fit as usual. Mom's stiff neck is better, I am glad to say.

Hope to hear of you all in due course. We seem to live for letters.

Love from Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Sunday July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

Aunt Jessie was in on Friday as usual and she says she does not see her way to going with us to East London and Iris does not feel keen on driving in busy streets like the East London ones probably are. That being so, we have decided to go by train, leaving here on Monday evening (tomorrow) 10.15 and arriving at East London dinner time on Tuesday. We have given up the idea of going on to Durban but will either return by boat to Port Elizabeth or by train arriving here on Tuesday morning at 7.14. We wired to Mrs Hudson asking her to book accommodation for us at La Rochelle Hotel, Currie Street (just opposite where she is staying) and which she says is very comfortable and reasonable. I am leaving instructions for post to be forwarded but I dare say there will be delays as the train service is not so good from here.

We are having properly cold weather just now but I anticipate that East London will be much warmer. I don't expect they get frost there at all.

Our rainwater tank is empty for the first time since we came here. The tank leaks round the bottom and I have asked Ernest to have it seen to but it has not been done yet. I don't feel inclined to spend any more money in improving the house. I have already spent over £70 on it, some of the improvements I could remove if and when we leave the flat. The ordinary tap water is very hard on our hands which are getting quite rough.

Ernest is sending each of the brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews a very nice reprint of the report of the funeral and photo of Uncle Herbert. You might write and thank him when received.

Grace wrote from Greyton on their way to Doonside. Expect we shall hear in a day or so of their safe arrival at their destination. I see by the newspaper that 50,000 visitors had arrived at Durban for the July Handicap. I guess the traffic on the road was pretty congested whilst Ted and family were driving down. I am glad to hear that they saw Muriel and family, also the Amblers when they passed through Maritzburg.

When we come back, I may make arrangements with a fellow Councillor, Mr Stock, to share his post office box so that we can get our post earlier than at present. It is so annoying having to wait until dinner time before our post is delivered by hand. It will mean more exercise for me walking to and from the Post Office every day but as Mr Stock lives in Bree Street, nearer the jail, he has offered to bring mine if I do not clear the box before eleven a.m.

I wonder if any of you have noticed any difference in the lengthening of the days. I have, the sun is shining in our lounge about five minutes earlier since June 21<sup>st</sup>. We have had our vines and plumbago hedge pruned and trimmed this week. The plumbago has nearly covered the arch at the front gate. It has looked very nice this season. It will be better this year.

I am not taking my typewriter this trip so I am posting this today instead of my usual letter on Wednesdays. I find that I use practically one thousand envelopes a year besides the 350 I use for Xmas cards. I must get some more printed soon but will wait until I see what is likely to happen as a result of our trip. I suppose you all have noticed the changes that are taking place regarding the air mail service and the increased rate of postage to one penny per half ounce. I hope no one has had to pay excess postage on any of my letters.

Ruth writes that some of her stories will be on the air for the next six Wednesdays. We had a nicely written letter from Lynne recently. We are still hoping to see Evelyn and the children (and of course Douglas) as they are the only members of the family circle who have not been to see us in our flat. We hope Blodwen has got over the second sitting of her teeth extraction business. The first dose was rather upsetting. They are longing for the time when they can move into their new house.

Today, 4<sup>th</sup>, Willie Saunders is 75 and is celebrating their Golden Wedding, which by the way does not come off until November, but as it was found difficult to have all the family together in November, they decided to have it now. I understand all their large family, including

little Willie from Naboomspruit and those from Kuruman, are all there. I wrote to him for the occasion. It must be a very happy occasion. We have to wait a few years more before we can look forward to our Jubilee.

We have the fire going in the lounge this afternoon as it is so cold. I see the paper is finished so must stop,

Lots of love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

We are home again after a week's jolly holiday at East London. I do not know how far I shall be able to get with all the news I want to tell but will try to get finished and post as usual on Wednesday so that you can get the letter by Friday. I think most of you write on Sundays and we get your replies by Wednesday. Mom is resting this afternoon as it is bitterly cold. She has a hot water bottle at her feet. It is such a contrast to the weather at East London. I was sorry I did not take my white suites with me there. Here I am glad to have my cardigan on and could do with something extra.

We did not have too comfortable a journey down. I ordered a bed from the steward which he never brought but we managed somehow. We did not have to change but the train has to wait for the Port Elizabeth connection for some hours at Cookhouse. We arrived on time and had lunch as soon as we got in. We were just opposite Mrs Hudson and Leslie so saw them soon after lunch. Both were looking very well but Leslie has to take care and rest a good deal as he is suffering from varicose veins and consequently must not walk much. He gets depressed at times. Doctor has not bandaged his leg and it is much more comfortable. He was much brighter yesterday when we left. Tuesday and Wednesday last were very nice days. The weather was mild and even warm. Thursday and Friday were wet but not bad enough to keep us in all day. One of the first things I did was to consult Dr Grey, who examined me carefully and said my blood pressure had gone down to 150. He admitted in course of conversation that doctors and patients often lay too much stress on blood pressure. He examined and tested my heart and other organs and was fairly satisfied with my general condition. He urged my going slowly and taking things as easy as I could, not to run after trams etc but rather wait and catch the next one. He had no doubt that I should find it easier for the heart to work at the coast. I soon found that out by being able to breath easier. He advises me not to eat much meat and to eat plenty of green vegetables. He does not find anything seriously wrong elsewhere so I can take it that I am fairly fit in most respects. Everyone remarked how well we were looking.

We saw a good deal of Edith Collett who is at East London with her niece-in-law, Mrs Pitt, from Eastern Transvaal. Mrs Pitt formerly lived in East London and having a car (her father's) she kindly took us about a good deal. She showed us all the different suburbs so that we could get a fair idea of the locality should we decide to take up our residence there. Her father wants to sell his house, which is very conveniently situated about the centre of the best residential part of East London. He wants £1800 but the ground round the house is very limited, though very nice. We saw a number of advertisements of places for sale or to let but if we do anything in that way, we shall try to get a place for, say, six months with the option of purchase at a fixed price. Cedric Loscombe, who used to work for us at Midland House, showed me over his house at Vincent which is a very nice suburb. It cost him 1250/-. He is in the System Managers Office at East London and is doing very well. He has promised to look out for us. One of Uncle Dan Trollip's married daughters is living at Cambridge and is in love with the area. However, there is no immediate hurry but I should prefer the climate and health conditions there rather than here. The great question is how it would agree with Mom.

We met quite a number of old friends. Mrs Rickett and daughters seemed pleased to see us again. Mr and Mrs Sowden are living with her married daughter and son-in-law, Mr and Mrs Schroder. He was working at Brown Rayners in Vryburg years ago. We spent one evening with them. I tried to see Cecil Green, who used to stay at Botha House whilst we were there. He is married and has a child. I wrote him and he came to the hotel but we were out. However he spotted us in town and stopped and had a chat. I went to hear Rev Meara preach in the Methodist Church on Sunday morning. I knew him when he was stationed at Mafeking. I enjoyed a chat with him after the service. Rev and Mrs Stephenson, former minister at

Observatory, were also at the same service so I saw them as well. I hoped to attend a S.O.E. meeting but unfortunately there was nothing on last week.

We saw a good deal of Trixie. She is radiantly happy in her engagement. She looks to get married on her birthday, March 17<sup>th</sup>. She is very well and is kept busy at her office. She spends as much time as possible with her Mother and Leslie. She hopes we will be able to be present.

Another person we called on was Rouse who used to be in Vryburg. He is still running his jewellery business but I understand has been insolvent once.

The proprietor of the hotel where we stayed is brother-in-law to Mrs Futter who before her marriage was Miss Adams, matron of the Vryburg Hospital. We were very comfortable there. They gave us an upstairs room overlooking the sea. They keep a good table and I think we both did justice to it. We had Mrs Hudson and Leslie over to dinner one evening and Trixie and Edith another evening.

One afternoon we took a motor launch up the river for a few miles. It is very pretty there and trees came right down to the waters edge. The ground was damp but I do not know if that was the cause of Mom getting a nasty cold or if it was bathing in an outside bathroom at the hotel. In any case it did not last long. What was a nasty experience was when we were going out one evening. Mom slipped on the polished granolithic stoep at the hotel and bruised her arm and hip. Needless to say, our outing was "off" for that evening. Mom is still a little bit stiff. Harvey Brown and Winnie and their children came to see us on Sunday afternoon and she also fell on the same stoep. I do not like these polished stoeps, they are very dangerous. The Browns and family are camped out at Kids beach, about 20 miles south. There are four car loads of Fish River farmers there together. They are charmed with the place. How I missed not having my car to go about just as we pleased. A car is essential for such trips.

There is yet another party we met who knows most of the Vryburg folk. He drives a taxi and took us from the station to our hotel when we arrived. We engaged him to take us to spend the evening at Schrodgers and as we said goodbye to them, we mentioned something about Vryburg and he at once pricked up his ears and asked if I was not Mr Butler. He said he thought he recognised me when he took us to the hotel but did not like to speak. It turned out that he is L. M. Saunders of Polokwane and knows the Hudsons and Douglas quite well. He remembered motoring Douglas to Kimberley once when Douglas's car broke down. It is strange how small the world is. He used to be a subscriber (or at least his father was) to the Northern News. When I told Leslie about him, he said he knew him and had seen him in town.

I suppose it was due to the change in temperature that caused my watch spring to break. The jeweller says that frequently happens. However I have got it fixed up again. It was Uncle Joe's and keeps excellent time.

I introduced myself to the Town Office and Mayor very kindly placed one of his officials to take me over the location as I wanted to see how they run theirs. They have 17,000 natives to look after. They have a staff of seven native nurses – no Europeans – a doctor etc. It was an interesting visit.

I struck a shop where they have a stock of Pianola rolls and are letting me have a quantity on approbation at 8 pence each for 50 at a time. They are all new and classical pieces. I have not got them yet.

Some of you will perhaps remember Miss Badger who was a teacher at Vryburg? I met her in the shop where Schroder works. She is married and living in East London.

Wednesday morning, 14<sup>th</sup>. I am glad to say Matilda was here shortly after we arrived yesterday morning and is working well. We might have had a serious fire recently as the wood we are burning in the lounge sends a good deal of sparks and we found that the hearth rung had been scorched in a couple of places. I have doubled the amount of furniture insured, making it £400.

I have been elected to attend the Synod to be held at Healdtown on August 7<sup>th</sup>. I hope to be able to attend. It will only last a few days. I think that yesterday's temperature was a record.

The maximum was only 46 degrees. It was bitterly cold all day with a strong wind. Give me East London climate to this so far as cold is concerned.

I have a number of letters to answer which came during our visit but must thank you all for yours received. I shall try to answer same with this. Please let me know if you have to pay any excess postage as I am only putting on the penny or half-penny stamps as the case may be. Dot reports that Norman has come out top in his class. This is his first quarter at school. We had nice letters from Denis, who is better again, and Rex who was expecting to go back to school in a few days time. Grace wrote from Doonside that they nearly had an accident going down. Joe and Blodwen look to move into their new house at the end of this month.

Later. A big post has come this dinner time and I am afraid I shall not be able to answer all the letters today. Thanks for all news.

Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

Just a month since the shortest day. When at East London, I noticed that the sun rose about fifteen to twenty minutes earlier than in Cradock and now we notice that the days are getting appreciably longer and we shall be glad to say goodbye to winter. The old saying that "as the day begins to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen" is proving true. I have not slept out since we returned from East London. Joe reports that one night the temperature in Bloemfontein was registered lower than any other town reported in the newspapers. Whilst we were away, we had a little rain here so we have some for our hands at least. We were very pleased with East London water, both for washing and drinking purposes. We drank quantities.

I am glad to say Mom is none the worse for her fall but the bruise has not yet quite disappeared. Whilst at East London, I lost trace of my scarf or necktie pin. At last it was found by one of the children in the bathroom where I must have dropped it. I was very glad to have it back.

I brought back with me a map of the town and surroundings, published by the local publicity association. It gives the names of most of the streets and will be very useful in finding places should we go there again. I sent an advertisement to the Dispatch to see what furnished houses may be available. I have asked for such for, say, three or six months with option of purchase. It does not commit us to anything but will afford us the opportunity, should anything suitable offer, of seeing if the place would agree with our health before making the move. I note that all of our children support the idea of our going to the coast but we do not want to jump from the frying pan into the fire as the saying goes. We will let you know what happens.

I had the misfortune to crack my plate biting a crust. It has been mended now but is not quite the same as before.

I noticed that Una's husband was involved in a car accident the other day but he was not injured but only the car.

I am sorry to see by the Northern News that old Mr Pavitt has passed away. I am glad I went to see him when in Vryburg at Xmas time.

Congratulations to David on coming top of his class at the last examination. Grace and family appear to be having a very nice time at Doonside. They bathe most days. It is Ted's birthday tomorrow, I think. It would have been Uncle James' birthday also on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

I shall probably go to Port Elizabeth on or about the 6<sup>th</sup> August so as to see Muriel and Wallis on their way to Cape Town where Aunt Emmie will join them. They are going by a nice boat, the best on the service.

Evelyn reports very cold weather on the farm. The children have had a very jolly holiday and are back at school.

Joe and Blodwen are getting excited in prospect of moving into their own house at the end of the month. I am glad to hear that Blodwen is quite reconciled to living in Bloemfontein. It will make a vast difference being in their own home.

We are having a few young people in this evening, including Mary and a young man from England, a friend of Mr Burt Davey who was on the staff of the government and used to visit us in Vryburg in connection with the investigations into lamsiekte. He is taking a tour round South Africa before settling down into business. We shall be arranging some farewell functions in connection with Mary's leaving at the end of the month. I do not know exactly the form they will take.

The sale of Uncle Herbert's farms etc is to be advertised for about the first week in September.

Letter from Grace to hand today complains of bad weather last week on the south coast. They are all well and enjoying themselves.

Evelyn writes that the severe frost have done damage to her beautiful garden. We are asking if the children, and family, could not come to us in the short holidays in September. They have never been to see us since we came back to Cradock.

We are going to see Mr Cursons, who has been on the sick list for a few days, this afternoon so will get my post off early. Hope you are all keeping well and that we shall hear good news of you in due course.

Yours affectionately,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I have a nasty cut on the top of my "typing" finger on the right hand which makes it very awkward to do my usual letter. You must therefore excuse me if I do not fill my usual sheet.

There is not much news to report this week. The mornings are still very cold. I have just taken the temperatures and it is still four degrees of frost. Some days have been very windy but generally fine. For two years Grass Ridge dam has not caught any water and the position of farmers as well as the town is getting serious. Farmers are urging Government to construct another storage dam on the Fish River but if this were done, it would probably take five years or longer before it was completed.

Our little flutter last Wednesday evening was very pleasant. Mary and Guy, Dorothy, Christine, Kramer, Tennyson and Naish. The latter is a friend of Mr Burt Davey in England. They came early as they had to leave early as they wanted to go to the Location to witness the presentation of the King's Coronation Medal to the Native Minister by the Bishop of Grahamstown. I went with them. It was a very nice function.

We have had calls from some of the Fish River families during the week. The sale of Uncle Herbert's property is to take place on September 9<sup>th</sup> at Saltpansdrift. If there are any things that any of you would like me to purchase for you, please let me know in time. Perhaps some of you may have seen in Tuesday's papers a telegram from Reuters Cape Town stating that Uncle's estate was valued at £58,000 odd. It is very doubtful if it will realise as much. The same telegram states that certain sums were left to different servants. The amounts are incorrect. The error has been made apparently by someone who has not read all the codicils to his Will, of which there were no less than eight. Stripped of all legal terms, the Will boiled down is as follows. After paying his debts, he gives £2000 (two thousand pounds) on trust for bursaries for boys from Cradock schools; £500 (five hundred pounds) to the Cradock Methodist Church; £500 (five hundred pounds) to Cradock Hospital and the 1820 Settlers training farm at Tarka; £600 (six hundred pounds) to Yaap Scriven; £300 (three hundred pounds) to each of three other Scrivens (brothers of the above); and £300 to Roux; also £20 (twenty pounds) to each of seven non European servants who had served him for many years. Any sum that Ernest's business may be owing to the estate is to be deducted from any portion that would come to Aunt Letty. He makes over to Ernest's wife the second bond on the Zaal. The balance of his estate is to be divided equally between all his brothers and sister.

It was Ted and Una's birthdays last Monday. Guess Ted and Grace and family will be getting home to Kroonstad at the end of this week. They appear to have a very happy time all together.

We hear that Ruth is to be President of the Grahamstown Women's Auxiliary of the various churches for the coming year. Congratulations to Ruth. Denis, we are glad to hear, is quite recovered from his recent illness.

Joe has sent an aerial photo which shows his new house and workshops. I am sending it round with this week's letter for circulation. Blodwen has blossomed out into newspaper life. Her article on the beauties of Bloemfontein, "Reverie on Naval Hill, Bloemfontein" by Blodwen Butler, has been published in The Friend (Bloemfontein). I am glad to see it and to know that she is so much better pleased with the city. They are busy moving into their own house this weekend. Joe says it will be 14 years next month since he started work on the Railways. How time slips by. I hope he never has cause to regret the step taken.

Dot had a weekend on a farm recently. The children were very sorry for their daddy who was left all alone.

We have had a few replies to our advertisement in the East London paper. Mom says she does not care about leaving Cradock but there is no harm in making enquiries. I am going to ask Cedric Loscombe to look at some of the places offered and report on them. If necessary, I may



give up going to Synod and might go to East London instead and see the properties and go on by the same boat as Muriel and Wallis as far as Port Elizabeth. It is not possible to say definitely what my movements will be but we have made arrangements for Mom to go to Grass Ridge whilst I am away.

Lots of love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

As it is possible Mom may be going to Grass Ridge either tomorrow or Thursday morning train (if no one comes in by car) and as I am looking to go to Port Elizabeth by train on Thursday morning, I must get busy. Not that there is much to report this week but it would not seem natural not to write.

We have experienced some very cold nights and the days have been colder than usual. The wind has been trying and one wishes for warmer weather conditions. Some days we hardly go out of doors until about four and then only for a short walk as Mom does not care to go far. We have walked through most streets in town and always keep our eyes on the look out for any suitable place where we would like to live but so far have not struck any. Building sites, except in the new township, which is too far to our liking from the centre of the town, are very scarce. We have not had a reply from East London where I sent the most likely responses to my advertisement for report. I wonder if any of you could assure us that you would come to East London if we were there, say, for a few months. Mom does not like the idea of going so much further away from you and Fish River folk.

Grace sends a postcard reporting their safe arrival home on Saturday after an eventful journey. The car for the fourth time on their holiday went wrong in the steering gear. Their month has gone very quickly. There is no mention of their having seen anything of Dossie.

Joe and Blodwen no doubt are settled in their own home by now. We may hear from them today. It will be a comfort to Blodwen when she gets her new dentals fixed up.

Dot writes that they have recently lost two of their friends and Church workers by death. One old lady fell whilst dressing and broke her hip and never recovered.

Whilst I think of it, you had better make a note of Joe's new address, it is 74 Exton Road, Bloemfontein. We shall be quite anxious to see it one of these days.

We have not given any thought to visiting any of you this Spring. We asked Evelyn if there is any chance of her and the children paying us a visit but have not had a reply yet.

Now that the postage rates have been increased, I think you all should study economy by writing on both sides of your letter paper. It would not be possible for me to do so on this thin paper but I always do on my ordinary paper.

I have finished my birthday book of relations and have indexed it as well. It is very interesting as I have got the births, marriages and deaths that have occurred in each month on single sheets. I have arranged the index in alphabetical order giving the same particulars against each individual. So if anyone wants to know the dates of any member of the family, it is available at sight.

The biggest job I have still on hand is the arranging of all the snaps and other photos that I have collected for years. It will take me quite a time to complete this as I get so many interruptions. The Town Council work keeps me interested as well. May the time never come when I have nothing to do.

There have been a number of functions recently in the way of farewells to Mary. I will send you each a copy of the Midland News giving account of some of them. She is going to Louisvale for a good rest as soon as possible. No plans have been made for the future.

The sale of Uncle Herbert's estate is advertised for September 9<sup>th</sup>. If you saw the report in the papers recently stating that it was estimated his estate would realise £58,000, I have it on best authority that this is quite fictitious. If it realises half that figure, it will be as much. In any case, there will not be any distribution until the estate is wound up and that will probably take a few months.

I hope to see Muriel and Wallis on Saturday at Port Elizabeth. My plans from there are not definite but will let you know as soon as I can.

Wednesday morning. I have just heard over the air that Durban was flooded last night. All electric lights are out and the power station seriously damaged. Wonder if this will affect Muriel and Co in their departure tomorrow. It is cold and damp here this morning.

I see that I am about the end of my sheet so must not attempt another. I do not feel that I am going to Port Elizabeth tomorrow but suppose I shall realise it when I am in the train. Perhaps Mom will have a chance of going by car to Fish River if someone comes in today. I am not taking my typewriter this time.

Love from Dad

53A Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday August 11<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

Here I am again, home again after six days absence. Mom left on Wednesday morning last week and I left by train on Thursday morning, arriving at Port Elizabeth about five pm. Mr Shingler met the train and I waited in his car whilst he finished off his business. As usual I had a warm welcome from her and her baby. Those of you who are interested in such matters, I may say John junior is a fine sturdy chap, nine months old and sitting up and taking considerable notice of people and things around him. He has two teeth and does not possess a dummy. He has a bountiful supply of playthings and has landed in a very comfortable and happy home. His collapsible wooden kraal is a great boon as he cannot get into danger and seems quite contented to play there. He is very friendly and good. A Rev and Mrs Grant and their deaf and dumb grown up daughter spent the evening with them and enjoyed playing a new game called Possession. It was quite late before we retired. Friday morning I spent in town calling on Dr Stewart and Mr Lander who supplied my glasses. The latter is a friend of Joe's in Bloemfontein. I think I mentioned before that they played tennis together there. He was interested in seeing the group of Joe and Blodwen and family. He was surprised to see how good my sight was – he tested it – and said it was practically normal. He adjusted the frames and thanked me for coming.

I then went to Dr Stewart and he too was pleased to see me. He recognised me at once. He too put me through the usual tests and was also pleased with the result. He pronounced it “perfect”. He said that the success or otherwise of an eye operation largely depended on the patient as much as the surgeon and nurses. He was kind enough to say that I was a model patient. I asked him about driving a car again. He replied “certainly” it would be alright. I am not at present contemplating getting one, however. I think I have mentioned before that I have never had an account from him for the operation and I was anxious to get this settled. I offered to pay him after the first op but he said I was to wait until the job was completed. When I went to him to say goodbye, he again put me off and said he would send me the account. This was November last year. I expected it at the end of December and again at the end of March and June, no account came. So I asked him if I was to thank him for having done it for free. He replied the account was paid. I said I did not know who the kind friend was that had paid it but I was sure that I had not done so. He then went to his bookkeeper and returned to ask when the first op was performed. He went again and after some minutes, he returned saying the entry had been overlooked and he quite thought it had been paid. He said he did not trouble about money very much so long as he had sufficient to carry on with. However, he would send the account and assured me he would let me down lightly. So I am waiting to see what it will be. I quite expect it will be in the neighbourhood of £40 or £50. He thanked me for coming to see him and was so pleased with the result of the op and so am I.

I made a few business calls in the afternoon and tried to see Mr Max Sonnenberg whose name I saw in the paper as being there. He had just left by car for East London. As you know, we were closely associated in business and municipal matters in Vryburg. He was Mayor and I deputy when the flu epidemic broke out there. He is running Woolworths businesses all over the country. I saw Mr Carter, Rev Booth Coventry, Norman Harris of the Herald office and others. I was sorry I did not see Mr Linton who lived with us in Cradock years ago. His daughter has just got married. More visitors were expected on Friday night but did not turn up but we again played so I had two late nights in succession.

Saturday morning I went into town with Mr Shingler who took me straight to the docks. Wallis Wells was just finishing his breakfast and Muriel was with the children. They had had a comfortable journey from Durban. Muriel found it not too nice the first night but soon got over the sea sickness. We saw over a good deal of the vessel. It is a beauty. They are travelling “tourist” class and it is all that an ordinary person can wish for. It is far and away better than the

first class on the old Drummond Castle that I travelled on over 50 years ago. The Stirling Castle only carried first and tourist classes. What the first must be like I do not know. I was told that there a suite of rooms for the passage money is one thousand pounds a trip. The deck accommodation is ample. There is a special playroom for children and games etc under the charge of a trained nurse. Every comfort has been studied and I am sure they will have a good time. As soon as they were ready, we all went by tram to Humewood where we had morning tea. We rested a while whilst the children played in the sand. They had to be back at the boat for the children's dinner at 12.30 so we did not have very much time to spare. There was also some shopping to do. They had arranged with a doctor friend who lived in Maritzburg, and is now practising in P.E., to spend the afternoon with him. They kindly invited me to dine with them on board and to arrive about five which I did. The dinner was excellent. We enjoyed a long talk and had arranged to be joined by Mr Howard Hemming for the evening but he did not turn up. (I saw him the next day when he reported that he was sick the afternoon before so could not come. He was very sorry to have missed seeing them.) I left about nine intending to take a taxi to Walmer but found the bus went near to the Shingler's house so went by that. A gent in the bus kindly put me in the right course.

(After breakfast) Mom has just arrived from Grass Ridge by train.

Sunday morning I walked to church in Walmer (about 40 minutes) and enjoyed listening to Rev Booth Coventry. A member of the congregation kindly motored me back. The congregation was much larger than we have here in the mornings. His text was "there was a rainbow about the throne".

In the afternoon Howard Hemming called and joined us in the motor and showed us his garden. In course of conversation, I remarked that if he knew of anyone who wanted a caretaker to look after their property in Walmer for a few months, I would like the job. Of course this was in fun. Walmer is the nicest suburb near Port Elizabeth to my way of thinking. I wonder if anything may come of it. We shall wait and see. The Stirling Castle did not leave Port Elizabeth until 6 am Sunday. I did not see it off. I had hoped that I might have been able to go on to Cape Town with it and see Aunt Emmie off as well but I did not say anything about it in my circle last week as I was not sure. I wanted to give them a surprise if possible. Perhaps I may be able to meet them at Cape Town when they return. They are looking to be back next August.

I left P.E. on Sunday night by train for Fort Beaufort arriving the next morning about seven. I could not sleep too well and was up early. After breakfast, I and other delegates to the Synod at Healdtown were motored out to Healdtown. We had very nice meetings lasting till about ten pm and then motored back to Fort Beaufort (six miles) to sleep. We all had lunch and dinner together at Healdtown. Ethne was very busy and the natives waited at tables. There were over sixty to meals apart from members of the Institution. The dining room at Healdtown for the regular students seats seven hundred at a time. Some room. We were shown the native girls dormitory which accommodates over 100. The Institution provides the bedsteads only. The students have to provide mattress, sheets etc. The place is wonderfully run. We were out again by nine on Tuesday morning for the continuation of the Synod. Harry Collett and three other representatives from Middelburg were there and I had arranged for them to give me a lift back here. We left just after morning tea and before the session was quite over. Arrived here about four pm and they were soon off on the rest of their journey – about another seventy miles. I had a message for Mary who was out at Uncle Walter's so I phoned to her and she let Mom know that I was back and to my surprise she came down from Grass Ridge this morning and caught the morning train, so we are together again. Mom complains of backache but I hope it will soon pass over.

There was quite a nice post waiting when I got back and I shall be busy answering letters. Douglas thinks it may be possible for them to visit us during the Michaelmas holidays. We hope it will materialise. Grace writes that they would be sure to visit us if we were at the coast. Blodwen writes that she was taken ill and had to phone for Joe to come home from the works. She had the doctor who pronounces flu. The children had also been in bed with it. She is much

better now. Ted is thinking that a change for him is coming. There have been a number of changes during the month he has been away. No letter from Dot this week so far. I had a nice letter from Milner recently. He has gone back to the old paths and is a changed man. We may all rejoice.

I do not think I must attempt another sheet as there are other matters to see to. I am glad to say we are both well. I had a giddy turn whilst at Healdtown. I suppose it was the altitude and my head is not too clear now.

Thanks for all letters received and with lots of love to all,

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

We are still here and are enjoying fairly good health, for which we are thankful. We should all of us count our blessings more frequently than perhaps we do.

Aunt Emmie, Muriel and Co got off comfortably last Friday and are due in England about 27<sup>th</sup>.

I have been busy replacing new laths on the front garden seat. It has been somewhat difficult as all the bolts have got rusted fast but I have managed it and hope to have the new ones on today.

Grass Ridge dam will be quite empty this week. The last drop of water is being run out as I write. I wonder what is going to happen this summer if we do not get our regular rains. Last summer we did not get them and the outlook for the farmers is not too bright. They are urging Government to build an additional storage reservoir in Fish River.

Our landlord has supplied a new rainwater tank for us. The one that was here when we came has always leaked and when the plumber examined it, he said it was not worth mending as it would fall to pieces when touched. Of course we have not a drop of rainwater until it rains again. May it be soon.

I hope all of you who have wireless sets listen in each morning at 10.15 to the morning prayers from Grahamstown. On Mondays the Baptist minister conducts and Tuesdays and Fridays the Dutch Church is responsible. Wednesday Rev Jacques of the Methodist Church and Thursday the Presbyterian's minister. On Saturday the service is conducted from the Cathedral. We generally listen and enjoy the services and should like to feel that you also are listening at the same time. Talking about wireless, I wonder if you have the same trouble as I do regarding the news service. I find that so often the reception is worse at those times than any other. I have written frequently about it but nothing seems to happen – or rather it does not seem to improve. I wonder if we are especially unfortunate.

Nothing further has transpired regarding East London so I suppose we shall just remain here. Three doctors have told me that I should have it easier for my heart at the coast but way does not appear to be opening in that direction so I shall give up the idea for the present at any rate. When in Port Elizabeth, I asked Blodwen's brother-in-law to draw a proper plan on the lines of what I sent round to you all some time ago. I have not received it yet and when it does come, it is doubtful if ever I shall build but I should like to.

Letter from Douglas this morning indicated that he will be going to S.O.E. Grand Lodge at Maritzburg in September and hopes to bring the family here about the same time. This is a treat for us to look forward to. He is kept busy with his drilling machine for the Railway department. It will be very nice having the grandchildren here. I wonder if we can arrange to go to the sea whilst here. It would do them all good. We shall wait for further particulars.

Joe writes that they are more and more pleased with the new house. Blodwen appears to be better. He says he would look forward to spending his next year's leave at East London if we were living there. Grace also suggests something similar. We shall wait and see what happens.

We have invited Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate to spend a weekend with us. We have not seen anything of them since they returned from Vryburg. We want them to bring Eric's Pat as well.

The mountain farms of Uncle Herbert's were sold recently and realised 31/6d per morgen – about £4000. The stock was not too good. I shall hope to go to the sale of Saltpansdrift. Aunt Jessie still talks of buying it. We all think it will be a mistake if she does.

Our violets have been very sweet this season and the almond tree is in blossom. We are still having frosts most nights. Recently during one 24 hours there was a difference of 40 degrees in the temperature. I find I can get up without the aid of electric light. The days are nice and warm.

No letters from Grace or Dot this week. Ruth writes that at long last her Mother has received the balance of the money from Mr Brown's estate.

The Town Council has started taking out the trees in Dundas Street and fresh trees are to be planted in Bree Street next month.

I must answer some letters this afternoon so will close for this week hoping you are all well and that we shall hear from you all in due course. We are very thankful for all news received from any of you.

Much love from  
Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I want to try an experiment for the next few weeks in the day for posting my circle letter. I have been posting on Wednesdays for some time but I find it a bit of a rush as your letters do not always come to hand until late in the morning and sometimes not till Thursday mornings. Wednesday is the usual half holiday here but that does not make much difference to us as we never play bowls or croquet and not having a car, there is no call to take anyone for a spin. We go for a walk as far as the park sometimes and that is about our limit. The fast train for the north passes here on Thursday night and I calculate that Bloemfontein, Kroonstad and Potgietersrus mails would all go by that train. I am not so sure about Vryburg mails. Grahamstown and airmail for England has to be posted here on Friday to catch the flying boat from Durban on Saturday. Will you therefore please return the envelopes and date them when received so that I can see if it makes any difference in time of arrival at your end. I always try to answer your letters the same day as received.

During the past week, I have busied myself in putting new laths on the garden seat in the front garden. It was a more difficult job than I anticipated. It was most difficult to get the old rusty bolts and nuts off and fitting them on again. However I have done it and painted it and it looks much better and is more comfortable than the old seat.

I wonder if you all read Ruth's last article in The Outspan of 13<sup>th</sup> instant on boarding schools of the past. It was based on information Aunt Emmie gave her of my Mother's experiences in her day and generation. It was quite interesting. I also noticed that they published a more recent photo of Ruth. Ruth and Denis have been spending some of the Kingswood school holidays at Port Alfred. Denis came top of his class again in spite of the fact that he was away from class for three weeks with chickenpox.

This week a piano tuner from Port Elizabeth has been up and overhauled my pianola and has put it in perfect order. He has given me several tips in the manner of playing it. He says it is an excellent instrument.

During the last few days I have been inspecting dairies in the country with the Council's Inspector. It makes a nice change and I am only away for an hour or so at a time. Of course the farmers are not notified as to when to expect us. At our next council Meeting, the election of Mayor for the ensuing year takes place. This will not be until about the end of September. I have been approached by some of the Councillors to accept the position if the present Mayor does not accept re-election. I expect he will.

We are glad to hear from Douglas and Evelyn that they are looking to bring all the family down for the short holidays – September 24<sup>th</sup> to October 5<sup>th</sup>. This is indeed good news and we are already making plans accordingly. Douglas is going Maritzburg to attend S.O.E. grad lodge on September 9<sup>th</sup> and after returning to Vryburg, looks to come on here with the family. We do not yet know if they will come by car but expect so. Some will sleep outside and we shall make them as comfortable as we can. We are also expecting Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate and Beryl and Eric's Pat after the Fish River sale on 9<sup>th</sup> for the weekend. We have not seen them since they were at Vryburg. I am just wondering if Joe and Blodwen will be able to come down for the long weekend – October 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>. It would be nice for the two brothers to be together, especially as it will be Douglas' birthday as well. Perhaps Joe and family could come for his birthday – September 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mary left on Monday night for Louisvale where she will stay with her mother and sister and brother for some weeks. She needs a good rest. Two municipalities that I know of are anxious to obtain her services. Aunt Letty will be 81 on 29<sup>th</sup>, Aunt Emmie and Co are due to arrive in England on Friday.

Letters from Grace and Dot to hand (Wednesday). Grace does not seem in good health, her nerves are not too good. Dot reports the birth of a son to Nelly Rickett on 13<sup>th</sup>.

Thursday. It is getting so light early in the mornings that I shall be able to resume my early morning walks before breakfast soon. I have not slept out since our return from East London but have the bed ready as I intend doing so very soon now.

We recently paid a formal call on the new Magistrate's wife. Three other ladies there, neither of whom we knew. Save me from formal calls. Dot's boys have developed the art of skipping. I used to be able to do it lying down when at school.

We have not had any rain this month and farmers are in sore need of water, or will be as soon as the last leading from Grass Ridge is dried up. The weather has been decidedly warmer during the past week but it is still cold at nights.

Much love to all  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

At the time of writing (6.30 am), it appears from Grace's and Joe's letters to hand yesterday that my posting on Thursdays does not cause serious delay in delivery. Joe got his on Friday afternoon and Grace on Saturday morning. Douglas, who had called on Grace, said he had received his on Friday before he left Vryburg. I think the Kroonstad letter should have been delivered on Friday. Perhaps later in the day we may hear from Dot when she received her copy. In any case, I could not have written yesterday as it was so full of other duties. Theo Trollip had died the previous day and I went to see the family (close to Rocklands) before breakfast. At ten, Mrs Loscombe was buried and I attended her funeral. At 11.30, the Auctioneer in Uncle Herbert's estate took Mom and I out to Saltpansdrift as he was going to value the furniture. We had dinner there and back again by 3 pm in time to attend Mr Trollip's funeral at 4. In the evening I attended a meeting addressed by De Elsie Chubb in the Location and was home again by 9.45. Fortunately we do not have many such hectic days.

This week has been quite like summer so far as the weather is concerned. In Port Elizabeth the shade temperature rose to 99. We have had it over 80. The nights still are cold. I am starting sleeping out again from tonight.

With regard to Mr Theo Trollip, his father married Grandpa Collett's eldest sister. He married a Dutch girl and was farming for some years in the district. I think we took Dot up to see them. Both he and his wife were great gardeners. His heart was very weak. He sent a message on Saturday evening that he would like to see me so of course I went at once. Mom and I went again after service on Sunday morning. He passed away about noon on Tuesday. He was buried by the D.R. Church as all his family have joined that denomination. Rev Weavers took part in the service at the graveside.

Mrs Loscombe's son, Cedric, used to work at Butler Bro in my days and is now living at East London. His mother was 88 and was such a nice old lady. Cedric has been kind enough to report on some of the properties which have been offered to us in East London. He came to see me yesterday afternoon.

The Executors suggest putting up the whole of Uncle Herbert's furniture as it stands for the brothers and sisters to buy but in one lot and resell to any one of them who may like to buy any item. He has put a low value but what he considers it would fetch if sold by auction. It would take a lot of time to get through. I am inclined to buy it and bring what is not disposed of there into town and store it in Ernest's Zaal. If we do build in town, which I want to do if I have to stay here – we could do with a good deal of it and could the more easily dispose of what we do not require than any of the others in the family. However we will wait and see.

Josie Biggs spent the weekend at the Poplars. She had been to Port Elizabeth attending the Womens' Agricultural Congress. She is looking very well and is bright as usual. She had morning tea with us on Monday. Dan has since been over by car and they returned to Louisvale yesterday via Graaff Reiniet where he has purchased an electric light outfit and is taking it with him. Aunt Eliza did not recognise her when she called to see her. She tells me that she and Dan are contemplating a motor trip to Pretoria in the near future and suggest going from Louisvale via Kuruman and seeing Douglas and Uncle Owen's three daughters on the way. I have given her your addresses and she is looking forward to seeing you. I have told her that Douglas and Evelyn are away at present and not likely to be back until schools reopen. Mary is at present at Louisvale and will stay some time there and when the summer comes, will probably bring Aunt Letty down to Cradock or Graaff Reiniet as she cannot stand the heat up there.

Canon Gould is being transferred to Kroonstad. He does not seem to have been popular here with his congregation.

Later. Joe writes that his op is postponed till about 15<sup>th</sup>. His tonsils are to be removed and he hopes to have relief from piles at the same time. They were looking to spend the long

weekend with us when Douglas and Co were here as well. Grace reports Douglas and Evelyn having looked in on their way to Maritzburg. I am posting to them at Pietermaritzburg today.

No letter from Dot today. Hope they are all well there.

The weather is much cooler today and I have taken to my cardigan again. We are both well and everything going on as usual. I am afraid I have made a lot of mistakes in typing but you must excuse them. Did I tell you I have at last received Dr Stewart's account, only £25.

Much love

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

The Mayor of Cradock greets you all. No doubt you will be surprised at this news. At a special meeting of the Council yesterday afternoon, Mr de Kock stated that the Board of Management of the Maartchappy had refused to allow him, as their Manager, to continue to hold the mayorship. Not only did he decline to take office but at the end of the meeting, he also resigned his seat on the Council. I was elected unopposed to the position. Needless to say, if I find the duties too much for me, I shall resign.

I am starting my letter this week on Tuesday morning as on Thursday morning we are going out to Fish River for the sale. We go directly after breakfast and I don't expect we shall be back before late in the afternoon. The Executors have decided to put up the whole lot of furniture in one lot so that one of the family can buy it all and such members of the family or anyone can buy from that one what they want. I may perhaps make the spec if it goes at anything like a reasonable price. There is an Electrolux cooler etc. The bulk of the furniture is not worthy of the house. However, we shall see. I would like to get something for each of you as a memento of many happy days you have spent at Uncle Herbert's.

Gladys writes that she received a cable from Aunt Emmie giving one word "well" which is satisfactory to know that she and Company arrived in that condition. Gladys also reports the death of Guy Farren. No other particulars are given. From what he told me when we last met, he was looking to go on pension shortly and was considering whether they would settle in Cradock. It depended where his son, who has qualified as a doctor in Scotland, would be likely to settle.

Yesterday, Monday, was the Thanksgiving Day at the Methodist Church. We attended the social in the evening and Rev Weavers extended very hearty congratulations on our new appointment. They raised over £60 in thank-offerings. This system has been in vogue for some years instead of holding bazaars. Dot writes that their local bioscope gives the church there a free evening once a year, the congregation selling the tickets. They hope to raise twenty pounds by the effort. The local ladies of Potgietersrus are evidently a progressive crowd. They have also asked me to get a prize list of flower shows as they want to organise similar shows there. I have sent some from the Horticultural Society here.

Grace reports a surprise visit from Douglas and Evelyn and the two little ones. They spent a night with them on their way to Maritzburg. I expect they stayed with the Amblers. They looked to return via Bloemfontein and look up Joe and Blodwen. They go back to Vryburg before coming to us. We do not yet know which day they will actually arrive.

Joe has had to put off his operation and goes to hospital about the 15<sup>th</sup>. He does not think he will be able to come to us for the long weekend as will probably not be fit to travel so soon. We should like to have them all together. Perhaps he will come to recuperate afterwards.

Ruth has had an offer of a seat by car to attend a series of Group meetings in Bloemfontein. If she accepts, we hope to see her when she passes through. She has had a dose of flu but has enjoyed a lovely holiday. Her landlord has put up the rent of their house a pound a month. I am sorry to hear this.

On Sunday evening, after our service, we listened in to Daventry and heard the President of the Methodist Conference preach from Wesley's Chapel, City Road. The message came through splendidly. We joined in the singing of the hymns. Mom kept in time on the pianola. I always listen in at seven am to the news and again at 1.10 pm. We still have our dinner in the lounge.

Aunt Letty writes thanking us for birthday greetings and says we are to have outside shutters for our two front windows. This will be some protection from the sun in summer. We are noticing the difference since the trees were removed.

We had a slight shower recently which has given us a few jugs full of rainwater for which we are very thankful.

So much I was able to write before breakfast. Mr Attorney Metcalf called directly after breakfast to offer his very hearty and sincere congratulations on my appointment.

I should go to Pretoria for a Conference on the new Native Laws which is being held about 28<sup>th</sup> September but as Douglas and family will be here then, I have cried off. An invitation has also come to attend the opening of the Rhodes University College Library on Monday next. The Town Clerk will motor Mom and me down to Grahamstown and back for the occasion.

Love from Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I find I must start my circle letter early in the week if I am to be ready to post on Thursdays. I have just returned from evening service on Sunday. It was so very cold today that Mom has not ventured outside the door. The congregation was small in consequence of the cold wind that is blowing. It seems as though a slight fall of sleet is going to fall. The country is terribly dry and a good soaking rain would be most welcome. There has been snow on the mountains round here.

Well I expect you will be anxious to hear how we are getting on in our new duties. We have had nearly a week of it and so far there has not been any untoward event. The telephone has been ringing a good deal by persons conveying their congratulations and several have called. Mr Metcalf was the first to call. I have arranged to be at the Mayor's parlour from 12 to one daily (except when I may be out of town) so as to save unnecessary callers here. The Mayor's parlour is a very nice room and well furnished. Writing table, chairs, cork lino, photos of councillors etc. I am sure I shall find the work very interesting but if I find it too much for me, I shall not hesitate to give it up. I have arranged for a civic service in the Methodist church next Sunday morning at 9. It is expected that there will be a large congregation.

On Thursday morning we went to the Fish River sale. It will simplify matters if I send you each a copy of the Midland with an account of same. Aunt Jessie at first bought Saltpansdrift but afterwards found she had made a grievous mistake and negotiations have been going on since whereby some of the brothers will relieve her of the responsibility but the arrangements are: the sale of landed property realised about £28 000. I do not know what the stock and farm implements realised. Aunt Jessie bought all the furniture for £75. I disposed of over £28 worth for her on the spot. The auctioneer was very smart and got through the sale by 3.30. We were home before six.

Yesterday, Saturday, we attended the semi-finals of two football matches, Cradock winning both events. Mom, as Mayoress, was called upon to present the cup, which of course she did most gracefully. I had to make a short speech which I hope was appropriate to the occasion. In the evening we went to a meeting in the Town Hall re a new system of group representation for parliamentary elections. I do not think it is a practical scheme at present. Tomorrow morning we are due to leave soon after nine for Grahamstown to attend the opening of the new library of the Rhodes University. The Town Clerk is driving us in his car. We look to be back the same evening. On Wednesday we have been invited to a social at Mortimer. Next month, General Hertzog is paying an official visit here so we shall have to arrange a function for him. In January, about 400 boy scouts are holding a jamboree in the park here. No doubt there will be plenty of work of one sort and another. I am glad to say Mom is taking to the duties quite naturally.

Tuesday afternoon, 14<sup>th</sup>. Well, we started for Grahamstown at quarter past nine yesterday morning and stopped at Bedford for morning tea. We arrived at Grahamstown at one and had lunch at the hotel. Directly after that we went to see Ruth and Mrs Brown. Am glad to say they are both fairly well. Ruth is going to Bloemfontein on 28<sup>th</sup> and Blodwen has asked her to stay with them. She will go via Queenstown so we shall not have the pleasure of seeing her as she passes through. Denis was still at school. We only had a very short time to chat as the function at the new library was timed for three. We should have gone to the official lunch but somehow the invitation miscarried. During the ceremony the Chairman announced that the Mayor of Cradock had accepted the invite but possibly the rain had delayed him so I called out "he is here" as I was sitting in the hall with students and others. We did not see Guy but saw Roslin. Mrs Hurndall's son, Bedford, came and showed us round the buildings which are very fine indeed. We left Grahamstown again at 4.30 and did not stop except for Mom who had a touch of car sickness a couple of times. We reached home at 7.45 so we did not do badly. The

Town Clerk is a very careful driver. We had rain in patches both going and coming but unfortunately none came as far as Cradock. We were introduced to several nice people and wished we could have stayed longer. We are glad we went and the local people there appreciated it. Our Council gives a contribution of 15 guineas every year. Mom is pretty well normal today. Rev Jack Cook came and spoke to us. He seems to be doing good work in Grahamstown.

I must do another sheet tomorrow so as to be ready for post on Thursday. I was not able to touch the typewriter yesterday as other matters kept me fully occupied. In the afternoon, I went officially to Mortimer to say goodbye to some well known residents there. Mom did not feel sufficiently recovered from her car sickness of the day before – especially as she had been up town in the morning doing some shopping. Alison went with me as she was also interested in the folk and was to report the proceedings. We were back before six. Nessie was there and several people I knew. The weather was perfect. After supper, Mom and I walked up to Aunt Eliza. I am sorry to say her rheumatism is not much better. She had Doctor to examine her knees and he has prescribed some medicine which I hope will do the trick. Her shoulders are also affected and she has to have help in dressing etc. She is as bright and busy as ever.

A telegram arrived whilst I was away addressed to the Mayor from Douglas asking for Joe's address and conveying congratulations on our new positions. A card from Evelyn states that they expect to be back in Vryburg on Sunday or Monday and will leave again on Friday for here, picking up the children, I presume, in Kimberley on the way down. We are to expect them on Saturday or Sunday. I am arranging for the Deputy Mayor to go to Pretoria instead of me for an important conference on the Monday as I do not want to be away when Douglas and family are here. I may be going to Durban in November on official business. The Council pays expenses of course.

We have not been overdone with callers so far but wherever we go, we are congratulated on our "elevation". (I am thinking I shall have to get my top hat stretched a little). I pray we may be kept humble. I am out for service as far as I am able. We are having a Civic service at nine on Sunday morning at which I expect there will be a large gathering.

This (Thursday) I have a very busy day. A meeting at 9.30 then a trip into the country inspecting a road on the Council's farm and from 12 to one I am in the Mayor's parlour to see anyone who wants to see me on official business. By the way, you can address to me in future to Box 24 as the Council gets their post there early and the boy can bring it down here if I am not at the office. We seldom get letters delivered before noon by hand.

We are hoping to hear today how Joe has got on after his operation. I am not sure if I have already mentioned that all Blodwen's people at Cape Town and Port Elizabeth have been on the sick list and it is probable that as soon as Joe is able to leave, he will bring Roy here whilst Blodwen goes to give a hand at Cape Town. Mrs Price suffers from her heart and the two sisters are not well. It is an anxious time for many as the weather has been so changeable lately.

Mom's garden has a grand show of blue flag lilies and other flowers. I must leave her to describe these. Our grapefruit tree is blossoming.

Letters from Aunt Emmie come frequently by airship mail. She had a comfortable voyage and has now gone to Uncle Willie where I expect she will stay some time. Aunt Hetty was at the station when she arrived in London. The weather had also been kind to them.

It is Aunt Eliza's 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Saturday and Joe's 36<sup>th</sup> on Sunday. Am very sorry he has to spend it in hospital. Hope you all write to him. It is nice that Douglas and Co will see him.

I do not expect you will be interested in all the Council news so I shall not burden you with it in detail in future. It is all very interesting to me but it cannot be so to you.

Later. So far no news has come from Bloemfontein regarding Joe so I take it that no news is good news. It will be nice to hear from Douglas next week how he found them all there.

Letter from Grace this am reports servant troubles but otherwise all well.



I must not attempt more this afternoon as there are other matters to see to and I think I have wearied you enough for this week. I am glad to state, however, that we are both well. Mom has got over her car sickness and we shall be going out presently to see some friends.

Much love to all

Dad

The weather is very hot today and is promising for rain.

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

First let me say that Joe had his operation last Thursday and had rather a bad time. The tonsils only were removed and apparently haemorrhage occurred and he lost a considerable amount of blood. He was very weak and exhausted but so far has recovered alright. The other op will be performed later. I expect to hear today that he is home again. I am glad that Douglas and family saw him. They were given special privilege to see him after hours. Douglas and Co did not arrive in Bloemfontein until Sunday morning. No it was Saturday, I think. Blodwen reports that Douglas was not well, suffering from his old trouble, indigestion. They were due back in Vryburg on Monday morning and look to leave for here on Friday if he finds things alright on the farm, which I hope will be the case. We are looking forward to their visit. I am sending the Deputy Mayor to Pretoria instead of me to attend some special conference on the native question as if I went, I should be away almost all the time they would be here. Evelyn and the children have never seen our abode. We hope Joe will be able to come for a rest as soon as he is well enough. Blodwen reports that her folk at Cape Town are better but they are looking forward to her visit.

Dot does not seem well and we should be pleased if she could come to us for an extended visit and go on to East London or Port Elizabeth for a change. It seems doubtful if Potgietersrus really agrees with her.

Ruth is leaving Grahamstown for Bloemfontein via Queenstown on 28 and will not be passing through Cradock. We are sorry.

I am writing this on Wednesday so as to be in time for posting tomorrow. Grace's letter is just to hand (10 am) addressed to Box 24. This is a great improvement to getting post at dinner time. She is busy as usual dressmaking for the children and herself. Thanks for plans of houses which I will study in due course. Mom has quite recovered from her jaunt to Grahamstown last week. I am hoping she will now agree to take up croquet again. Today is quite hot and we all hope it will bring rain which is badly needed. On Monday I had no less than seven committee meetings to attend which occupied my time from 9 am to 5.15 pm. Today, Wednesday, I have had three.

Aunt Eliza is still suffering from her "screws" as she calls her rheumatism. I wish she would have someone, a lady, companion to stay with her. At present her native servant helps her dress. However, she prefers being without anyone extra in the house.

Aunt Jessie was in this week and informs us that Uncle Norman has bought Saltpan's drift but she is to continue living in the house as before. She will help him finance it. She is giving up her room at The Poplars. She does not know who she will get as a companion to stay with her but an old gent who has worked for Uncle Norman, Mr Barnes, is going to live there. One of Uncle Norman's boys will stay at Yaap's place, which Uncle has also bought. I do not know when the estate will be finally wound up.

I am sending each of you a copy of the Mayoral service which was well attended. There will possibly be a repeat service in the location.

We have not been inundated with visitors this week so far. Our plumbago, vines and fig trees are coming out nicely. The front hedge will be a grand sight shortly.

Thursday. We did not go to croquet. In fact I have not played since we left Cape Town. I used to play at Pinelands occasionally. I shall try to sell my set of bowls.

Letters from Joe and Blodwen this morning report good progress towards recovery. Keep it up Joe. Hope the treatment prescribed by doctor will do what is necessary. Dot writes that she is getting better. We shall be pleased if she can come and stay with us for a season. The Mayoress could very well do with her assistance. Am glad to hear that you have had some rain. Dot says we are a remarkable family by keeping in touch with each other as we do by writing each week. We should miss your letters terribly if they were to cease.

I have to go out this afternoon. I am inspecting the power station. We are both keeping well, Mom has a slight touch of pain in her shoulder but expect it will be better soon. Hope so. Aunt Eliza is still troubled with "screws", can't dress herself comfortably. We try to see her each day. It is quite hot again today and no rain with us.

Lots of love to each and all. No news when Douglas and Co will be here. We shall be very disappointed if they don't come.

Dad

53a Bree Street, Cradock  
Thursday September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I am afraid I shall have to give you short rations this week, we have Douglas, Evelyn, Arthur, Lynne, Rex, Kingsley and Cecily with us. We are delighted to have them. It is nearly three years since we arrived back in Cradock and this the first time that they have been able to visit us. As you know, Douglas and Evelyn had been to Natal and stopped at Bloemfontein on their way back to Vryburg and spent a night at Joe and Blodwen's new home. Joe was in Hospital at the time but they were able to see him. We are glad to know that he is now home again and is doing better. Douglas and Evelyn got back to Vryburg on Monday evening and left again on Thursday for Kimberley where they picked up the three at school and incidentally traded in his car for a new Chev and came on as far as Rooispruit, reaching there on Friday afternoon. He phoned on Saturday morning saying they were working their way down to Cradock, calling at Grass Ridge, Saltpansdrift, Orchards and Katkop and would arrive on Sunday afternoon. They did all this and got here a little after seven. I was at service but Mom was in to receive them. It had been a very hot day and they were tired. We managed to sleep them all. Douglas and the two bigger boys were in the double-decker on the back stoep, Evelyn and Lynne in the twin beds in the spare room and the two smaller children on the floor in the same room. Douglas does not sleep too well so we have fixed him up in a room in the house opposite. The children were thrilled with the pianola and enjoy playing it. They have also enjoyed playing with the "hit-a-pin" game I have had for some years. Another game "do you know" has caused good fun. Thursday morning. Letter writing is somewhat difficult but I must hurry on. On Monday evening we all nine of us went to the bio. This is the first time since my "op" that I have been inside a bio. The picture was good and we all enjoyed the evening. I have not felt any ill effects. Cecily went to sleep before the performance was over. My "official" duties this week have included attending the Rovers Football Club annual dinner as the guest of the club. The 1<sup>st</sup> team won the challenge cup at Port Elizabeth last Saturday. Last evening I presided over a meeting in connection with the Xmas stamp fund for tuberculosis sufferers. Saturday afternoon, Mom and I are invited to a Dutch wedding and reception in the Town Hall. We also attended a farewell social to Canon Gould who is transferred to Kroonstad. All nine of us packed into Douglas car yesterday afternoon and went to the warm bath. Douglas and the children bathed. Afterwards we crossed the river and went to the old plantation where we lived when the children were young. The owners of the place have just bored and struck what is claimed to be a record supply of water – somewhere in the neighbourhood of a million gallons per day. This morning Douglas is taking his family to Mortimer to visit his old war companion, Goshen Cawood. They will be back after lunch. They have also had some tennis and have been about a good deal. Yesterday afternoon, as we went to the Plantation, a very strong south-easter sprang up which made it very unpleasant. No one has apparently caught cold.

I am glad to say Aunt Eliza seems a little easier of her screws. She has not been out of her house for some weeks but of course is up and about every day. We have continued good news from Aunt Emmie in England. She has seen a good many old friends already, Mr and Mrs Halliday and Miss Kelly, who we knew at Cape Town. Alice Biggs' daughter, Honor, is passing through Cradock this evening on her way to England for a course of study.

A postcard has just come from Blodwen saying that Joe is better and is going into hospital again for the second operation before resuming work. We all hope that his health will be greatly improved when all this is over. Blodwen also says that Ruth has arrived and will be returning via Cradock. Douglas and Co have not decided when they must leave for home and Kimberley.

Congratulations still continue to come in from different parts of the country on our new appointment. I am told that I must have a new photo taken with the chain of office.

Please excuse all mistakes. This letter has been written amidst many interruptions. My dear love to each and all, Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It is mail day and I have not been able to start my letter earlier in the week owing to visitors and other causes. I should be very sorry to break the continuity of these epistles as I do so desire to keep the family in touch with each other and ourselves. I think I have a complete record of these letters for the past four or five years which some day I may find of sufficient interest to reread.

Well, I have a meeting at ten this a.m. to discuss how to entertain General Hertzog when he visits Cradock on 22<sup>nd</sup>. This will be a new experience for us. Of course we shall not be expected to put him up. There are quite a number of other functions in the near future that we have to arrange for. One is a conference of Afrikaans Christian Women's Aid Society where I have to give an address of welcome and give a social in the Town Hall on Tuesday.

Douglas and family left us on Sunday morning (9.30) in a strong north wind heavily laden with dust. It was one of the most disagreeable days we have had this season. The weather has turned bitterly cold and as I write, I am glad to have my cardigan on. Heavy overcoats are necessary in the evenings. Our fruit trees will, I fear, suffer. No rain has fallen and the Council is prohibiting the use of water for garden purposes from today. Douglas and Co had morning tea at Grass Ridge and dinner at Uncle Owen's and slept at Jackobsdal, not far from Kimberley that night. They spent Monday in Kimberley and expected to get home on Tuesday. Needless to say, we have enjoyed their visit but I fear the children found it rather dull instead of being on the farm. They attempted some fishing but there were none to be caught. They went to the egg rock and the plantation, our old home. The owner of the place has recently struck a big supply of water and perhaps this may be a solution of our town's difficulty. We are negotiating in the matter. They also visited some farms and Douglas met quite a number of his old friends. They spent most of one day at Goshen Cawood's who was Douglas' officer during the Rebellion. He also saw Clifford Saunders at Highlands. He bought a truckload of young cattle which are to be sent up to the farm. I hope they do well there. The evening before they left, they went to the slippery rocks and did what their father had done many times before in his young days, slid down this old landmark. Douglas also renewed his youth in this respect. Three of the children hurt their toes in the exploit but not seriously I hope.

We were disappointed on Monday to receive a wire from Ruth saying she and her party were not returning via Cradock. We had made arrangements for extra dinners and were looking forward to hearing latest news re Joe and Blodwen. We quite understood the matter as she was travelling with some of her Grahamstown friends who had very kindly given her a seat in their car to attend the Oxford Group meetings there. We have had a card from Joe saying they had greatly enjoyed her visit and attended some of the meetings with her. Joe was going into hospital again on Tuesday or Wednesday. We have not yet heard if this was so, may do so during the day. He looks to come here for a rest before returning to his work. We do not yet know if Blodwen will go to Cape Town with Merle. We are glad to hear that her folk are better.

Grace writes the church bazaar is over and they seem satisfied with the financial result. I think they would have done as well or better with a thanks-offering day. She reports that the children have for the most part kept their good places in their examinations which is quite good. They all seem to be well.

Dot scolds us for thinking she is ill. We are glad to hear that she is playing tennis again. There is no doubt that she has not been up to concert pitch, however, and we still hope she will come to us for a rest cure. We are still in the dark as to where or how we shall spend Xmas. I hope some of the family will be with us.

We were very disappointed that we had missed seeing Dossie de Kock (Dennison). We had recently called on the ex-Mayoress (her sister-in-law) but she was out. She returned the call shortly afterwards and we were out. I was sitting next to her at a Dutch wedding on Saturday

afternoon and she told me that Dossie had been here and they both called to see us. We should so like to have seen her. She has returned to Durban.

I have forgotten to mention that whilst Douglas and family were here, Ernest and Alison kindly invited all nine of us to supper at the Poplars. We had a very enjoyable evening. We met Honor Biggs who had broken her journey for the day on her way to England. She is going to (must stop now for breakfast). After breakfast, a Friends Institution to study social service. They have granted her a bursary from the balance of the funds over from the Friends School that we attempted to establish in Natal. It will be a wonderful experience for her. She looks to be away for a couple of years. She leaves Cape Town by this week's mail-boat. I hope she will see Aunt Emmie and the few relatives we still have in England.

The following evening we were all invited to spend with Aunt Eliza and quite enjoyed ourselves. We did not stay very late as everyone was more or less tired and we did not want to overdo Aunt Eliza so we dispensed with her usual spread of refreshments and had ice-creams all round instead. The children were very interested in the ship musical box and other curiosities. I am glad to say that Auntie seems a little easier of her rheumatism this week. She was able to brush her hair yesterday when I was up to see her. Gladys has offered to come up and fetch her if she will go to Cape Town for a few months. I do not like the idea of her being alone in the house without a woman companion but unfortunately she will not hear of having anyone extra.

After dinner. This morning I have had a deputation regarding the reception for the Prime Minister and have fixed up a programme which I hope will work out satisfactorily.

Letter from Blodwen says the op was to take place either on Wednesday or today. We have not heard anything further and am quite satisfied to wait as he is in good hands. A postcard from Evelyn from Polokwane reports all well so far. They expected to sleep at Maude's that night. The children were sad at going back to school. Letter from Dot reports all well in her area. We are always thankful for these items of good news.

Aunt Emmie has written many letters telling of their doings in going about the country. She has spent a fortnight at Uncle Willie's and has been to Sidcot where Wallis, Mary and Ernest were at school. Uncle Willie, from photos and all accounts, seems to be excessively stout. Compared to me, I am wasting away. I should think he is twice my girth. All the party are improving in health.

On Monday, 11<sup>th</sup>, it will be three years since we arrived back in Cradock. Aunt Emmie predicted when I left Cape Town that we should be back there in six months. I do not know when I shall get an opportunity of visiting there again. I am looking to go to Durban officially in November but am not certain of the date.

Uncle Herbert's bequests of £2000 to the Bursary fund for the Boys School and £500 to the church have now been paid. We do not know when a distribution to the heirs will be made but most likely it will be done in more than one instalment. We do not know what the amount is likely to be.

I have many other things to do this afternoon so will ring off as Douglas often says. We are both keeping fit and of course miss having the children about us. It has been a real pleasure having them and hope it will not be so long before they visit us again. I hope by that time, if we are spared, to entertain them in our own house. I am taking steps to see if I can obtain the corner property that I want.

Much love to each and all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

October is a month of many anniversaries so far as our family is concerned. Today is our 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our wedding day and there are no less than 22 other birthdays and a dozen weddings amongst the members of our family circle coming off this month. All of these I have recorded in my family birthday book which I have compiled from the Collett and Butler family trees. Needless to say, I do not write to each of them but I do like to remember as many as possible. In our own immediate circle there are Douglas, Grace, Ruth, Kingsley and Uncle Joe.

We all have much to be thankful for many mercies received in the past and we look forward to a continuation of the same.

We are glad to know that Joe is over his second operation. He has a great deal of pain and I do sincerely trust he will enjoy much better health in the future. He has been away from work for some weeks and we hope he will come here before resuming his duties. I can sympathise with him as I have had a similar op when we lived in Market Street.

We have been favoured with letters from each home during the week, all very interesting and for the most part, all good news. Ruth found her Mother and Denis ill when she returned from her Bloemfontein trip but they are both better now. There has been a lot of sickness at Kingswood recently.

Douglas writes that they found everything in fairly good order on reaching home. They saw Eric and Freda and some of the others on the way back. The day they left here was terrible for dust. The children enjoyed watching the cycle races in Kimberley. Unfortunately one of the motor cyclists was killed in a crash. We have had bright letters from Arthur and Rex. They all seemed to have enjoyed their holiday here. Come again.

All are well at Kroonstad and the children have done well at school last quarter. The church bazaar brought lots of work for Grace and over £50 for the church. Canon Gould, who has recently left here for Kroonstad, seems to have been favourably received and created a favourable impression. The Church of England here are getting the Somerset East minister here.

Dot and Reg wrote congratulating us on our wedding day for which much thanks. They report having had an inch and a half of rain on Sunday night. I wish we could report a similar downpour. Last evening a dry storm passed over us and about half a dozen drops fell but not enough to run off the roof. The heat has been abnormal lately, 95 and 96 in the shade the last two days. Dot wishes we would built at some seaside place where we could all meet for holidays. She mentions Still Bay. It is somewhere near Oudtshoorn I think. Reg wants her to get away for a good change. They are hoping to get to East London for Trixie's wedding in March. We must see what we can do about it.

I have made an offer for the corner piece of ground near here but do not expect the owner will accept as I have only offered the site value. If it is not accepted, I have another plan in view which might be suitable.

I am glad to say that Aunt Eliza seems better this week. She still finds it very painful to rise from a chair and her knees are sore and stiff. She is able to do her hair and help herself a little better.

We have had a fairly busy week. On Saturday afternoon I had to extend a civic welcome to the Afrikaans Women's Christian Association Congress. There were about 150 delegates from all parts of the Cape Province. Mom of course was with me. The meetings were held in the Zaal. They kept us there for two hours and they seemed to appreciate what I said. Needless to say I did not speak in Afrikaans. Then on Tuesday afternoon we gave the delegates and their hosts and hostesses a social in the Town Hall. This went off very nicely and was really sociable. I had referred in my remarks about my being the only Man in a woman's meeting when my Mother took me to a Friends' women's meeting when I was a very small boy. A lady spoke to me after and told me that a friend of hers had married a Friend in the Louis Trichardt district

(Transvaal) named Graham. I have written to find out who he is. There were a few people that I knew from Cape Town, especially Mrs Steyn who knew Aunt Emmie. Her society bought part of the Friends Meeting house in Cape Town. This was my first public social and I am glad it was a success. Next week (22<sup>nd</sup>) we have a full day with the Prime Minister, General Hertzog. I have to preside at four functions, including a lunch with him. I shall be glad when that is over. We are supposed to give an at home on our own account and had intended having it today but as there is so much on at present, we have decided to put it off for the present.

We miss Aunt Jessie's weekly visits on Fridays. She does not come to town so often now. She has removed her furniture from Ernest's and has given up her room there.

After breakfast. We understand that Aunt Jessica is advertising for a suitable companion. She needs someone to motor her about whenever she wants to visit. Uncle Norman is stocking the farm and Uncle Gervase may take some of the lands. Uncle Jack had supper with us one evening this week. His daughter, Gladys, is to be married on November 1st. No invitations have been sent out yet we hear.

I am supposed to be in Durban for Municipal Conference on electric lighting and kindred subjects on Monday November 8<sup>th</sup>. If the Tow Clerk goes by car, I shall probably go with him and see a part o the country that I have never seen before. He would go through the native territories and along the south coast of Natal to Durban. He has done the journey before and I am sure I should enjoy it. Mom would not go. If I don't go by car, I should probably go by train and try to break the journey on the return trip at Kroonstad and Bloemfontein. A boat trip via Port Elizabeth is also possible. I cannot say definitely at this stage but will let you know as soon as things are settled. You can let me know your views on the matter. I expect there will be a number of such trips during my year of office.

After dinner. No fresh news to report. No word from Bloemfontein today so take it that Joe is making satisfactory progress.

Mom is going to her WCTU meeting at four and I have to meet a deputation re water for the town at the same hour and a meeting of property owners this evening. Tomorrow night there is to be a meeting of ratepayers to sanction or reject a proposal of the Council to raise a loan of £12 000 for street improvements. I hope it will be passed.

I hope we shall be favoured with such a good budget of letters every week as we have this week.

Lots of love to each and all  
Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It is Wednesday afternoon and tomorrow I shall be busy with meetings in the afternoon so must get a move on.

We are having wonderful weather lately. It is difficult to keep well as one day it is excessively hot and another day cold. On Sunday it was 101 and Tuesday 78 and still no rain. The clouds have frequently come up but no rain comes down. I sincerely hope we shall not experience what so many parts of the world have had after droughts, a severe flood.

News from Joe is to the effect that he may have to stay in Hospital for some days yet. He has suffered a good deal of pain over the last op but they have no doubt his general health will greatly improve. He cannot say when he will be likely to come to us but we hope he will before resuming work. Blodwen and the children are keeping well. Her folk at Cape Town are mostly better but one of her brothers was taken ill and had to go to hospital. Her sister at Port Elizabeth has moved into their own new house recently. A letter also came from Dick Upton yesterday offering his congratulations. We have had such a number of such from all parts of the country.

A note from Ruth this morning reports that her mother has not been at all well for some time. Denis was better again. I hope you all wrote to her for her birthday.

Douglas wrote re our 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary and suggests that we arrange to celebrate our golden wedding at their home as being the most central and convenient. Thanks very much, we shall have to wait and see.

Grace evidently missed the post as we have not had her usual epistle today. Hope it comes tomorrow.

Dot writes very cheerfully as usual. She is very proud of her roses and hopes they will flower again in March when they look to hold a show. Their boy, Piet, has not turned up although his three month's leave has expired and a letter has come for him, so they are wondering what has become of him.

Our ratepayers meeting turned down part of the scheme for which we asked for authority to raise a loan of £12,000 and only granted £5,500. After this week, I am expecting the council work will ease off a little. I shall be glad when Friday is behind me. General Hertzog is due to arrive about 11.30 and a cavalcade of cars are to meet him a few miles out of town and escort him in. I shall have to ride in his car I suppose. After touring through part of the town, I have to give him a public welcome on a raised platform in the Market Square. After that we are entertaining him and a party of about twenty-five at a private lunch at one of the hotels (at the Council's expense of course) and that means another speech. At four pm we are giving a social to him for the public to meet him in the Town Hall where tea will be supplied. Another speech. In the evening there is to be political meeting at which I have been asked to take the chair but I am trying to get out of this as it will be difficult, not being bilingual. Mom is doing her part quite well. Perhaps we will go out to Fish River for the week and afterwards. In addition to the above, I hear that a dinner is also being given him in the evening but not by me but I am expected to attend. Fortunately we do not often have quite such a hectic time.

Aunt Eliza is somewhat better of her "screws" but is not free of pain by a long way. Uncle Willis cabled asking for latest reports last week and I replied "much improved". The pain is still troublesome in her hands and knees. It is very difficult for her to get up when she has been sitting down for any length of time. Her movements are consequently slow.

Thursday morning. It is a great convenience getting my post from the Council's box (No. 24) as I can thus attend to same before going to the office before noon. I generally go round by Aunt Eliza first as she rests in the afternoon. Letters from Aunt Emmie yesterday are not too cheerful as Muriel was suffering from asthma and was in doctor's hands and Auntie was not too well herself. Rheumatics were troubling her again. Aunt Hetty was to have had her staying with her for a visit but her housekeeper, who has been looking after her for some years, suddenly took

ill and may have to leave so she had to put off having Aunt Emmie for the present. Both were very disappointed.

Later. No news from Bloemfontein the last few days so take it that Joe is doing quite alright. Letter from Grace says Harold is not too well, sore throat etc. but nothing serious. She has been without a servant for some time. Otherwise all are well. I must not attempt another sheet this week so will close with dear love to all as though named.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning early. It gets light so early now that I can rise earlier than ever, especially as I have resumed sleeping outside.

I don't suppose you will want to hear much more news regarding the visit of General Hertzog as I have sent each of you a copy of the Midland News of Saturday which contained a very full and up to date report of the various functions. In fact there was very little else in that issue. I am very pleased the functions went off so well. At last night's meeting of the Council, a very hearty expression of appreciation for the way the visit was carried out was made and endorsed by the meeting. Incidentally there was not a single word of Afrikaans spoken the whole evening and the meeting was one of the longest on record. We sat from eight till 11.15 with a few minutes break for a cup of tea which was much appreciated by Councillors and the Press.

Uncle Owen came down by car in the hope of getting an interview with General Hertzog regarding his pet scheme of flooding the Kalahari Desert but way did not open for such. He was introduced to him but there were so many who wanted to have a chat with the Prime Minister that a long discussion was out of the question. We did not shake hands with all the hundreds of guests but can sympathise with Royalty when they have to do so at their State receptions. I can assure you it is somewhat tiring. I was devoutly thankful that at the last moment I was able to get out of the job of taking the chair at the political meeting in the evening. The place was packed and hundreds stood outside and listened to the speech through the loudspeakers. It is estimated that there were 400 to 500 cars parked on the Market Square.

I felt that we should have a little rest after all the strain and excitement so Uncle Owen motored us as far as Fish River and Mom and I spent the weekend with Aunt Jessie. Uncle Norman's Neville was there and a Mr Barnes, who is looking after Uncle Norman's farming interests, is also staying there. On Saturday afternoon, we had a splendid rain but it only lasted for about an hour, registering about half an inch. Water was running all round the house and all hands were out water leading until late into the night. Farmers were delighted. Grass Ridge dam did not benefit very much but it has given us a few days extra storage in our local storage reservoirs. On Sunday evening we all sat out in Uncle Norman's car and listened to the S.S. anniversary service which was being broadcast from Grahamstown Presbyterian Church. It was very good. We expected Ruth was in the service as she usually attends that church. We came back by train on Monday morning and found everything in order.

A card from Joe reports that he was allowed out on the stoep and is making good progress. We are now waiting to hear if and when he is likely to be able to come to us as I am due to leave for Durban about next Wednesday or Thursday. Mom does not want to go with me this trip so I shall probably go by boat and return by the same vessel to Port Elizabeth. This will give me the greatest change and as you know, I like the sea. Mom will go to Uncle Norman's most likely if Joe does not come here whilst I am away. I hope we may hear this morning as I have to book my passage.

Our opposite neighbours' little boy has recently broken his right arm in the same place for the fifth time. He is a nice little chap and we are very sorry for the mother.

Aunt Letty is back in Cradock and we hope to see a good deal of her. She had supper with us on Monday. Mary is at Port Elizabeth nursing Mrs Addis Smith's child. She expects to be away for a couple of months.

I am glad to say that Aunt Eliza is no worse. I think she is rather better but still suffers a good deal of inconvenience in not having freedom of movement. Dr saw her again this week and has changed the medicine.

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup>, 6.30. I have decided to go to Durban and back by boat. I am leaving here on November 4<sup>th</sup> and expect to arrive back on 13<sup>th</sup> about 11 pm. I do not think I shall take my typewriter so you may be short of a letter next week. I shall take a supply of postcards with me.

Later. Letters from Joe and Blodwen just received state that Joe may be leaving Bloemfontein tonight for here. He will only spend a few days. We are so glad he is coming. It is trying to rain and hope it succeeds. We are both well. Sorry Blodwen will be alone but she expects to go to friends at Shannon while Joe is away.

Much love to all

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

The news of the week is that Joe and Roy paid us a visit from Friday to Tuesday morning. I think the change, though short, has done him good. He was certainly brighter and feeling better than when he came. It has been a quiet time for both of them but that is what he required. We went to the park and Aunt Eliza's a few times. He is resting at home for a day or so before resuming work. He has to get a certificate from the doctor before he can go to work. He hopes to start on full time on Monday. We shall be glad to hear how he gets on. Blodwen stayed with friends at Shannon whilst Joe was here. It was rather unfortunate that I had a number of special Committee and Council meetings to attend whilst Joe was here. Our water question is giving Councillors considerable anxiety. I hope we shall be able to give some temporary relief in the course of a few weeks. If it would rain, our difficulties would be solved. The weather comes up nicely day after day but the rain does not come down. On Saturday we experienced a real old fashioned dust storm such as we were used to have in the olden days.

On Tuesday evening, after the telegraph office was closed, I had a phone call from Port Elizabeth Post Office stating that Douglas had wired saying the Mrs Rodger passed away peacefully and the funeral was on Wednesday at Kimberley. I could not see how I could attend as I am leaving on Thursday evening for Durban. Her passing will make a lot of work for Douglas as I understand he is her sole Executor. He had been managing her affairs for some years.

Rev Weavers offered us seats in his car to attend Gladys' wedding at Fish River on Tuesday morning. No invitations had been issued as it was desired that it should be a quiet affair. I did not see my way to going. Mom went and after the wedding reception at Uncle Jack's, Mr Weavers went on to congratulate Willie Saunders on their Golden Wedding. He had three punctures on the trip and this, combined with the heat, upset Mom so by the time she arrived home, she was car sick. They originally intended coming back in time for dinner but did not arrive until about 5.30. I had meetings in the afternoon so it was as well that I did not go out. I have telegraphed to Douglas.

The Town Clerk and I are leaving by train on Thursday evening for Port Elizabeth. If you want to write to me, I have arranged to stay at the YMCA, Durban. I leave there on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>. Mom is going out by train Thursday morning and will stay at Uncle Norman's Kat kop, until my return. I am arranging for my post to be sent on to me.

As I write (Wednesday afternoon), a shower is falling which I hope will continue. We had quite a nice post this morning, letters from Douglas, Grace and Dot. All report being well. Douglas was anxious about Mrs Rodger and doctors had had a consultation and expressed the opinion that she could not last long. They were evidently correct. Douglas thinks that Kimberley does not agree with Rex and is considering a change of school nearer the coast. Arthur may stay another six months in Matric class. Kingsley is likely to go to school. Grace says the Conference is shifting their minister after only one year's service in Kroonstad. Of course, there is special reasons for the change as he is specially qualified for mission work. Dot does not think they will be able to take their holiday until March when they hope to go to East London.

In connection with Council work and paragraphs which have appeared in some papers regarding my principles, I have received a number of letters congratulating me in the stand I have taken. Only one paper has adversely criticised my action. I have been kept busy acknowledging these letters. The YMCA board and Botha House were amongst the number. Some were from perfect strangers.

I am glad to say that Aunt Eliza seems decidedly better the last few days. Her hands are still swollen but she is able to move about much more freely than before. In fact, one day she

was actually doing a bit of weeding in her garden. She has only had the doctor twice and then only to satisfy relations who were anxious about her.

Thursday morning. I have just seen Mom off to Fish River. We had a nice rain during the night and our tank is about three quarters full. We shall most likely have more today. This will ease our town supply for which I am very thankful.

It is just about a year ago that I was in Durban last and came round to Port Elizabeth with Aunt Emmie for the third operation. What a lot has happened since then. I can never be thankful enough for sight restored.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> this month, my brother Willie celebrates his Golden Wedding. I have written congratulating them on the event.

We had a little hail this morning but no wind with it. Hope you all keep well and will write as usual. I look to be back in Cradock about 11 pm on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>.

Love to all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

Here we are again and I am thankful for journeying mercies. I arrived home at 11 pm according to schedule. Found the house all safe and sound. Was quickly into bed and asleep although I had a good sleep in the train coming up.

I think I sent each of you one or two postcards whilst I have been away but I expect you will want to hear something of what I have seen and where I have been. The sea trip, both going and coming, was very enjoyable. The sea was calm and except for some swell, one could hardly tell that the ship was moving. We each had cabins to ourselves each way, the meals were good but I wish they would print the menus in English instead of French. Coming back we had Rev Barnes' brother and his daughter at our table. He is a Presbyterian Minister stationed at Germiston. They were very good company. There was also a Miss Distin and Mrs Whatirn of Central Hall Women's Auxiliary. We all had much in common.

At East London, both going and returning, I called to see Mrs Hudson and Trixie. George is still there and is looking very well. Mrs Hudson says she is going back to Vryburg in March as she is so much better, has lost about 40 pounds in weight but cannot stand the loneliness of living away from the rest of the family. Trixie is leaving her situation soon and is going to Johannesburg for Xmas and looks to go on to Reg and Dot. The wedding is to be on March 17<sup>th</sup> and we are to be asked to be present. I hope we may be able to arrange to do so.

At Durban I saw Rev and Mrs Perry (formerly of Observatory) and exchanged a dozen of my Pianola rolls of music with them. They seem very happy in their work there. I stayed at the YMCA and was very comfortable. They have recently purchased the Eastern Telegraph Co. building for the same figure £20 000) as we did at Cape Town. They had a House Warming the last evening I was there. Their charges are very moderate and you pay for your meals as you get them. For a shilling or less, you can get as much as you can eat.

The meetings were only held in the mornings. Most of the papers read were rather technical but the discussions were instructive and helpful. The afternoons were devoted to visiting the Government Electrical Supply plant at Congella. This was very wonderful. We have very little idea of the work involved when we switch on our lights or power. The immense variety of processes and machinery that is involved is surprising. It is truly a big undertaking. Another afternoon we were taken over a large sugar estate where the whole process of manufacture was demonstrated. This, too, is a very big business and is mostly run by electric power. We were also taken on a trip on the bay and inspected the docks etc. We were fortunate in seeing the airship depart with the European mail. There was a strong wind blowing at the time but she took off beautifully. I think there was a letter of mine on board for Aunt Emmie as I had called to see the people she stayed with whilst in Durban. There was also a Mayoral reception and dance and supper at 10.30 one evening. I did not stay to the end but went home in the Mayor's car about 11.30. Another evening we went to see a local production "Goodbye Vienna" at the Pavilion. So altogether you see we had a good time. The weather was kind to us. It was hot but no rain.

On the way back I saw Mary at Mrs Addis Smith's and had morning tea with her. Mrs Smith was expected home from hospital yesterday afternoon. I had lunch with Blodwen's sister and family in their new house yesterday and Mr Merrifield saw me off at the station. Their house is very pretty. He, being an architect, has studied the comforts and details in every respect. The whole family seemed well and very pleased with their new home. I also ran across Mr Max Sonnenberg (Woolworths Ltd) formerly of Vryburg. He was Mayor when I was Deputy when the flu epidemic broke out there in 1918. We were both pleased to meet. I saw John Shingler at his office but was not able to go out to see Una and the baby. They are not far from Mary at Walmer and she will try to look them up. Mary will be staying with the Smiths until after Xmas and then looks to go to the sea with the rest of the family.

Mom is still at Fish River and I expect her home tomorrow morning. Matilda sent word about eight this a.m. to say her foot was sore but she hopes to be able to come to work tomorrow. I hope so too. I got my own breakfast and had dinner at Derecourts and am going to supper at Aunt Eliza and then to service. I wanted to get this off this evening so that you can know the latest. I found about 20 letters waiting for me this a.m.

It has been very cold and showery all day. Our tank is nearly full.

Much love to all,

Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

My Father would be 111 years old today had he lived. He died at the age of 64.

It has been a busy week so far. I am glad I wrote on Sunday as time is few as the native boy once said. Mom returned up to time on Monday and was surprised to see me at the station to meet her as she thought I was only arriving that night.

I think I forgot to mention in my last that I went out by train from Durban to see Mr and Mrs Irons. I had some difficulty in finding their house as I had only approached it by car last time I was there. I enquired at a few houses before I found them. I am glad to say they were both very well and we were all pleased to meet again. I should think they find it rather lonely there, especially in the winter. I also saw Dossie one evening. She and her husband had arranged to join with the delegates in a motor spin round the Bluff but as Mr de Kock could not come at the last moment, a lady friend of Dossie's came. They were rather nervous of driving as there had been a number of assaults and hold-ups so we decided not to proceed and I took them to the bio instead. Dossie had called to see us as she passed through Cradock some time ago and we were out that afternoon. She seemed well and happy. Rev and Mrs Perry also called and we exchanged a dozen Pianola rolls but I have not had time since my return to try them over.

The week before our regular Council meetings is always a busy time as all the various committees hold their meetings. As I am ex-officio a member of all, it takes up a considerable amount of time. One day I had no less than eight to attend. It is all very interesting and I am getting into the way of things. Yesterday I had to open an electrical exhibition in the Town Hall. This evening a large committee meets to make final arrangements regarding the forthcoming Jamboree in January. Between 400 and 500 scouts are expected here from different towns in the Eastern Province. I am on the provisioning committee and shall have to open the Jamboree. I am looking forward to the next Mayoral Congress at the Strand about March or April next.

Next Tuesday afternoon, we are having an at home in the Town Hall from 4 to 6. I shall be glad when that is behind me.

Mom says Aunt Jessie was not very well whilst she was at Fish River. Aunt Letty was staying with her. Mom spent one night with Uncle Gervase and Aunt Rouena. Uncle Norman's adopted daughter, Joan, is going to Johannesburg Hospital in January to take up nursing. I wonder how she will like it. There is no water in Grass Ridge dam yet. Fortunately some rain has fallen in the district but more is needed now. Yesterday the temperature on the stoep was 99 in the shade. Today it is very much cooler.

Blodwen, in her letter received this a.m., says the heat there has been excessive lately. Dorothy says much the same from Potgietersrus. In fact it has been hot everywhere. Douglas has written particulars re Mrs Rodger's funeral. It must have been a sad time for all of them. Mrs Rodgers had always looked upon Douglas as if he was her son. He sent us a letter from one of Mrs Rodger's friends speaking in the most appreciative manner of the help and assistance he had rendered during the past years.

Whilst I think of it, we have decided not to go away for Xmas this year. We shall be most happy to have any of you who can come to us but unless we can see our way to make a tour of the various homes – which we do not see our way clear to do just at present – we had better leave it. We do hope that all of you will have a very happy time together wherever you are. We felt the heat very much last year and this house is cool.

Aunt Eliza is feeling better. She has not actually been laid up and the swelling of certain joints appears to be going down. It will be a new experience for her to go out of her house as soon as she feels that she can. I must try to answer some of the letters before we go out this afternoon so will close with much love as usual to all concerned.

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning (early) and there is much to be done today so I want to get on with the job. Our maid, Matilda, has not turned up since Friday which does not make for easier working but we are managing to keep the home fires burning as they say. She is genuinely sick – rheumatism, I fear. Aunt Eliza has sent us one of her maids and we hope our own girl will soon be able to resume her duties.

You will be glad to hear that Mom's "at Home" yesterday afternoon was voted a great success. I was hoping Aunt Eliza would have honoured us by attending. I offered to send a taxi for her both ways but I can quite understand that she did not like to face a number of people, especially after being indoors for so long. I do not know how many people were in the Town Hall but it was comfortably filled and was fully representative of both races. We arranged with the ladies of the Women's Auxiliary of the Methodist Church to do the catering and arranging the Hall at my expense, the fee being devoted to Church funds. They were very pleased to do this and did it very well. I arranged with one of our leading musical organisers to arrange for a short musical programme. He did this very nicely and everyone was appreciative both of the quality and variety supplied. There were only eight items, including two from Rocklands. At the school breaking up concert last Friday evening, we were struck by two items given by the very small girls and Miss Stopes, the Principal, kindly let them repeat their items. If there is any report in the Midland, I will send you copies. We are glad that it passed off so well but do not think we shall venture on another for some time.

Sunday was Temperance Sunday in most of the churches. I took the morning service in the Methodist Church. The day was one of the hottest we have had. One day it was 104 on our stoep. We had about half an inch of rain on Tuesday afternoon and our tank is nearly filled. The kitchen and back veranda leaked a good deal and Ernest is going to have it seen to. Aunt Letty is in town staying at the Poplars whilst Alison is in hospital for about a fortnight for a slight operation. She often comes along and has a meal with us. Mom spent the evening with her last night whilst I was at Council meeting. This was not over until past 11.30. We had to adjourn until this morning – hence my hurry to get on with my letter. I am also due to open a non-European sports meeting at 10 but shall have to postpone this until this afternoon. There is also a united service for rain in the D.R. Church at noon. So you see we are kept busy.

I am also getting busy with the addressing my Xmas cards so as to get them off in time. It is rather a big job. I am sending round a copy of a photo of the councillors and one of the Karroo garden for you all to see. Mom has had her photo taken this week. I hope it turns out well.

We are glad to hear of Grace playing tennis again. She complains of backache but hope it will soon pass over. Ruth writes that she is very busy acting as Commissioner for some of the exams. This brings her in quite a nice little sum every year.

I should have mentioned in connection with the at home that there is a reception being held in the Town Hall today (Wednesday) and the parties concerned asked if they could decorate the Hall on Tuesday so we had the added advantage of their decorations. We left some of our tables etc for their convenience as well. They also asked for some of our plumbago for decorating the tables. During the social, Mom was presented with a nice bouquet.

Thursday morning. Yesterday was a very full day and I was not able to add to this. However we got through all and sundry duties.

Mrs Halse writes that she has not a cottage at Kids Beach but has written to a friend of hers who has. She is in very delicate health. Grace writes that she does not know what to do with the children during part of the long holidays. Send them – or some of them, to us for a time. Am glad to hear they are having Rev Tautell's wireless set. Ruth writes that she is busy as Commissioner for some of the exams. Matilda turned up during yesterday morning and we were

glad to see her back. Hope she turns up again today. Uncle Gervase popped in for dinner. Aunt Letty had supper with us. Alison is making good progress but will be in hospital for another week. Evelyn says her garden is so lovely but they are wanting rain again. We had a storm on Tuesday.

Much love to all  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

The most important news to report this week is that on Tuesday we purchased a house in Dundas Street, just beyond Krugers Lane. It originally belonged to Sam Pieterse and is one of the best in that stretch. It is on the opposite side to this house and faces West. For some time past, we have been looking round and have inspected about a dozen or more but we heard of this one a few days ago and decided on Tuesday to take it. We are to have possession of it on January first and Ernest has inserted an advertisement in Tuesday's paper for this one to let. Today we have had half a dozen people to see this flat and I expect it is taken by now as houses are so very scarce. I think you will like the place. It has three bedrooms, a nice lounge, bathroom, dining room etc. There is plenty of garden and a garage. It is considered one of the best built in town and is in very good order. I shall, of course, prepare a sketch plan and send it to you for inspection. The dining room is 22 by 17 ft and other rooms in proportion. We are paying £1050 for it.

Joe and Blodwen may perhaps come to us for Xmas by car. We shall be pleased if they do. We suggested to Grace that she sends her boys to us but she is keeping them at home. They may be selling their car soon. I think I told you they were getting a wireless set from the Minister who is being transferred at the beginning of the New Year.

On Saturday last we were invited to lunch at the hotel in connection with the Eastern Province Tennis tournament. We watched some of the games afterwards. Cradock ladies did very well. In the evening we went to a local entertainment in the town hall and quite enjoyed it.

I should have said that before finally deciding on buying the property, we thought it wise to let our doctor overhaul us both in case he thought it unwise for us to get rooted here. He was quite satisfied with Mom's condition and after taking my blood pressure and carefully sounding me, gave it as his opinion that it would be safe though he felt sure I should find the coast easier so we shall have to be contented to take trips when we feel to need a change. Mrs Halse's friend has written offering her property near East London for £750, furniture included. It is right on the beach and I am sure this would not do for Mom.

Joe says it is just over 20 years since he started work. How time flies. He says that he appreciates the training he had at De Beers workshops. He did not like it at first. Blodwen has sent a contribution to the Outspan. I hope it is accepted.

Aunt Emmie complains of the winter cold in England but they are all keeping well. They have spent one third of their time already.

Aunt Eliza is gradually getting better I think. She has not been out of her house for at least two months. I still try to see her every day.

I have finished addressing all my Xmas cards but have not got the cards yet.

Grace says Pam has developed German Measles. This is unfortunate. Her boys are taking part in the Nativity play that is coming off shortly.

Ruth writes that Denis took three prizes at Kingswood. We were sorry not to be able to go to the breaking up but there was such a lot of official work on at the time that it was impossible to get away with any degree of comfort. We are attending breaking up functions here today and next week as well. Ruth has been successful in getting some more of her articles published.

It is now Thursday afternoon and I have no less than three committee meetings this afternoon so must finish off before I go back to the Mayor's parlour. I am so glad to say we are both keeping fit and expect to be very busy right up to the time of moving. We have had a number of prospective occupiers of this flat to see over the premises. It is rather awkward as it ties us down.

Much love to each and all,  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning and we have to attend a soapbox Derby this afternoon. This evening we have to go to the prize distribution of Boys High School and so it goes on from day to day. I am very interested in all the different activities and am not complaining. I am very thankful to have the work to do and to be able in some small measure to be of some service.

We are hoping to be able to move on or about 28<sup>th</sup>. Our house is 34 Dundas Street. This is really a continuation of Bree Street and is near the park. It will be a few steps further to church but about the same distance to the station. We shall be a little nearer the shops but a few yards further from the Town office. All the trees are being taken out of the street and new electric light standards have been erected. I have drawn a rough plan of the house which I am sending to Joe to pass on to Grace etc. When we are settled down, I will try to do a better one giving more details of the ground etc.

Christmas will soon be here. Please, all of you, do not think of sending us presents as we do not need them and you all have enough to do to buy presents for your children. We will send a small cash present to you to use for your children.

Ernest has let this flat to a railway man named Barratt. He has agreed to take over our geyser and electric stove. Ernest is taking or rather paying for some of the improvements but will not pay for the majority of them. I shall give a good deal of them to Aunt Letty as she says she did not authorise them. I don't want to be under any obligation to the family.

Mom is busy putting our Xmas cards into their envelopes. We have sent off the overseas ones and shall post the colonial ones about 15<sup>th</sup> so as to get them out of the way. Some cards have already arrived from overseas.

We have not heard from Joe and Blodwen if they are coming to us for Xmas. There was talk of their meeting Grace and Co half way but as Grace has had Pam down with measles, that seems to knock that plan on the head. We are glad to hear that she is better now but perhaps there would be some risk. Grace and Ted celebrate their 13<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on 10<sup>th</sup>, many happy returns of the day. May they be spared to each other for many years.

We have not heard from Douglas for some time but we know he is very busy. Evelyn sent us a couple of snaps taken just as they were leaving us. They are quite good. Dot has sent a couple of her boys trying to keep cool under the spray. They are to be sent round and returned to her.

Rev Withers writes that his house at Cambridge will be available for March, April and May and possibly June. I think he wants £10 per month. What do you think?

Dot suggests in hers to hand today that we get a companion or housekeeper. I think we shall continue having our mid-day meal sent to us as Mrs Derecourt's house will be almost opposite to us and it will save a lot of work and worry. We shall try it at any rate for the first month or two. Dot also reports on their S.S. anniversary with Norman singing a solo. Keep it up Norman. He surely takes after his grandpa???

Thursday morning. We can all be very proud of Denis who is now Dux of Kingswood. He won three prizes. He and Ruth are now at Port Alfred and I hope will have a very nice holiday.

We are having some very hot days lately. The nights have for the most part been cool. There is a good deal of sickness about but am thankful to say we are both keeping well.

Yesterday we had the three eldest sisters to dinner - Aunt Letty and Jessie and Mom. It was quite an historic event. Ernest's wife is still in hospital but expects to be out at the end of this week. Aunt Letty has been looking after the house whilst she is away. Aunt Jessie returned to Fish River yesterday afternoon with Fenner Moorcroft.

We held our last Council meeting for this year this evening as so many of the councillors are going away. I shall be glad of the rest as we shall be busy moving as soon as we can. We expect to get into the house about 28<sup>th</sup>. It should be an easy move as it is so near.

Aunt Eliza is still improving but has not been out yet.

With regard to the offer of Rev Withers to take his house at East London, will each family please let me know by return if you would come and visit us there if we do entertain the offer. He is in a hurry to know so that if we don't take it, he can arrange with others. It would not be worth our while entertaining it unless we were sure of your coming.

Love from

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Thursday December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning, early, but I want to get a move on as this afternoon there is a gala at the warm baths in aid of the hospital funds and Mom has been asked to distribute the prizes. The Town Clerk is leaving this morning on holiday and this and other matters will make more work for me I guess. Each day brings it quota and it is all very interesting and keeps one healthy though busy. On Saturday evening we had invited the European staff of the Council – about 30 of them – and the Councillors to the bioscope and refreshments afterwards. The picture was “Rainbow on the River”. If you have the chance of seeing it, I think you would like it.

Our Matilda has not turned up either yesterday or today. It is very awkward but I suppose it cannot be helped. Our old boy John has approached us for work and perhaps we shall get him to help us move. Tuesday morning about six thirty, Uncle Gervase and two daughters rolled in for the stock fair. Of course I was up and had made coffee so was able to fix them up. They stayed to breakfast and dinner. The girls were charmed with the pianola and made good use of it. It does make a difference without the maid. I was busy packing away the books in preparation for moving. Of course we are not nailing things down in cases but just for convenience in handling the things. We have arranged to take over the oilcloth in the passage and dining room in the new house which will save us a good deal of trouble and expense. We are still hoping to move in about 28<sup>th</sup> but if Joe and Blodwen decide to come to us for Xmas, we shall try hard to get in before then if possible. The difficulty is that the present tenant has to wait on the party who is in the house they have taken. Ernest, acting for Aunt Letty, has taken over £25 worth of improvements that I have made. Besides this, I have given her the front gate, archway (which by the way is a beautiful sight as it is completely covered in flowering plumbago), the back stoep which I enclosed with mosquito gauze and other items amounting to over £20. The new tenant is taking over the geyser etc amounting to £9/10/-. I hope he will also take over the blinds.

Thursday morning, early. We shall have hot and cold water laid on into our new bathroom. We are taking over the lino in the passage and dining room from the present tenant.

As today is a public holiday, I suppose we shall not get any post so we do not yet know if Joe and Blodwen will be here to share our Xmas dinner. I notice that special trains are running, leaving Bloemfontein on Friday night arriving here Xmas morning 8.20 and returning from here Monday evening 6.26 arriving Bloemfontein 4.39 Tuesday morning. I do not know if this would be any inducement. I fear in any case we shall not be able to get into our new home before 28<sup>th</sup> as the other people cannot get into their new home.

The swimming gala was rather a poor effort but will add something to the hospital funds. Mom did not go out so I did the needful. There are a number of people camping out at the warm bath.

Grace reports that Jean got first prize in Sub A and David second in Standard 4, the other two have done better than previous quarters. I am glad to hear that the attack of German Measles has passed over and there are no fresh cases. I think we can manage the moving without employing Hyams. I have booked a three ton lorry at 7/6d per load. The shifting of the plants will be the most difficult job. Matilda has been away sick since Monday. It is very awkward, especially when there are visitors and anything special on. We are thankful to have her when she can work.

Quite a number of cards have come in already, also Xmas letters, a nice one from Mrs Herbert Tilbrook. She says Mrs Dennison Brown is with them at present.

Later. Still no post so there is nothing further to answer. We have been taking down pictures and fittings so as to avoid a rush at the last. I wish we could move in at once but that seems impossible. However it won't take us long when we once begin.

Aunt Emmie writes that Muriel's children have developed Chickenpox in a mild form. They are spending Xmas near Southend-on-sea. Aunt Emmie will spend the day with Aunt Hetty. Aunt Eliza is still getting better I think. Does not go out but wants to come and see us when we are settled in our new home.

I suppose you will hear from us again before Xmas but if you don't, we hope all of you will have a very happy time wherever you are. Last year at this time we were making for Douglas'.

Much love and best wishes for a truly happy time,  
Yours as ever  
Dad



53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

I am writing and posting today so that you may get same before Christmas. The six o'clock hooter has just sounded and early coffee has been served. There is much to be done but we cannot really do much moving until Tuesday as the people in our house cannot get out before then. However, we have done a good deal in getting ready. The dining room, spare room, and passage are dismantled of their pictures etc and the other rooms are ready as far as can be.

Matilda came back to work on Monday, for which we are very thankful. We have taken on a boy and he is removing by handcart the plants etc which can stand outside at 34. Mrs Bester has allowed our workmen to fix up the bathroom and the front room is being repapered prior to our getting in. This will save us a lot of mess. I am having hot and cold water laid on to the bath as this will save a lot of trouble with a geyser. The new tenant coming into this flat is taking over mine. The two big flower pots by our front door have already gone and the place will look very different when we have finished moving.

This will be our first Christmas spent in Cradock since our return. It is going to be a very quiet one as so many people are away. We shall have our dinner together here as usual – so different to former years. We have been expecting that Joe and Blodwen might come but they have decided to stay at home this year. Last year we were at Douglas' and Joe and Blodwen motored over there. This year we shall picture each family in their own homes. I trust you all have a very happy time. Needless to say we shall be thinking of you all. Mom is making a Xmas pudding today and I think we can raise a bit of holly. We are not doing any decorations. I am down to take the evening service in the Methodist church as our minister is away on his annual leave. The congregations have been very small since the schools broke up.

Our post has been pretty heavy the last few days. Over 40 one day, mostly Xmas cards arrived. We have not sent Xmas presents this year as it is so difficult to know what to send so have sent a small sum of money to the parents to get what they think best for their children. We have sent each home an enlarged photograph of ourselves which I hope will arrive safely. I left it with Mr Lidbetter to do the packing. I could not send them framed so must leave that to you to have done if you wish it. Under the circumstances I think perhaps you should return the postcard size ones recently sent and we can distribute them amongst other relations.

We have received replies from all of you regarding hiring a house at East London for three months next year but as none of you are able to see so far ahead, we have decided not to entertain the offer but to take our chance of getting a place if ever we do go. I think we shall try to go to Trixie's wedding in March but a lot may happen between this and then.

Congratulations to Norman on being top of his class. He is now moved to Standard one. His first letter to Grandma does him credit.

I think we have had letters from each of you during the week. Evelyn refers to the children's home-coming and their astonishment at the way the garden has grown since they were home last. Douglas is as busy as ever, he had been to Pretoria on Farmers' Association work. Fortunately they have had some rain but not enough. We have had some nice showers but the tanks are not full at 34. I have had a new one erected – 1400 gallons.

Ruth and Denis are enjoying themselves at Kowie. I have not seen the Xmas Outspan and do not know if Ruth has any of her contributions in it. They were all sold out here when I tried to get a copy.

Joe is taking to gardening. I shall have to try my hand with a spade as we have a good piece of ground at No. 34. I don't think I shall get very far but we will see.

After breakfast. Only 45 Xmas cards have just been delivered. It is very nice being remembered by so many friends. Including those sent out as from the Council, I have dispatched altogether about 700.

I am glad to say Aunt Eliza is keeping about the same. She does not go out yet but wants to come and see our new home when we are settled in and she is able to get into a car. The Town Clerk is away on holiday so this puts a little more responsibility on me. Things are working smoothly and it is all very interesting. Am thankful for the rain we have had and hope for more. When our tanks are full at 34, we shall have over 2000 gallons on hand. Don't forget to be very thankful for all the blessings we enjoy.

I must stop with all good wishes for the season and a prayer that God's richest blessing may attend you in the New Year.

Yours with dearest love

Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1937

My dear All,

We have finished our Xmas dinner and Mom is resting. I have had my nap and so thought I would spend a few minutes before afternoon tea in having a chat with you all. I hope you have enjoyed yourselves so far in the day. We have pictured you in your separate homes – no two of you together. In 1934, we were eight adults and eight grandchildren together at Kroonstad, the following year we had Grace and her four here whilst last Xmas we were at Douglas' and Joe and Blodwen motored over as well. This year each one is on their own. We shall hope to hear of how you all have spent the day.

I attended service at seven this morning in the Methodist church. There was a fair attendance. After nine, I visited the gaol and addressed 66 prisoners for a few minutes. I was surprised to find so many there but was informed that all the chronic sick from different parts of the Union were sent here for the benefit of their health. One of the prisoners interpreted for me. From there I walked through part of the location and greeted two of the native ministers on their way to their own services. I also called at the Dispensary and had a few words with the nurse in charge. There have been a number of deaths from dysentery lately there. On my way home I called on a few of the neighbours and conveyed greetings. At 10.30 Mom and I motored up to the old people's home in Hospital Street – the house where Aunt Emmie and Uncle Bert lived for some years – and gave the old folk some sweets and a little talk. One old lady is 94 and I should think all of them are over 70, two are quite blind. From there we went to the hospital. Matron kindly showed us all over the place. Every ward was decorated with flowers, balloons and paper festoons. Of course everything was very clean and tidy. Some of the non Europeans seemed to be the worst cases. Three little kaffir babies looked very comfortable in their beds. On our walk back, we called to see Mrs Percy with whom Mary used to live. She has been a great sufferer for a long time and has a very weak heart. She has been better lately and was up and about. We also popped in to see Aunt Eliza. She had all her Xmas cards and presents laid out on her round table and was pleased with the remembrances which had been sent to her. From here we walked home and rested till dinner time. This consisted of fowl – very tough – a nice assortment of vegetables and plum pudding, custard – not Woodhouse brand – mince pies (which we have saved for future reference) and some of Aunt Eliza's gingerette. After good meat, good rest was our next item.

I should have mentioned that about 5.30 a small crowd of native children paraded the main streets – including ours of course – with drums and tins. They were very orderly and kept very good time and evidently what was to their satisfaction, they made plenty of noise. There was no rowdyism but it disturbed many from their sleep. I was up as usual. We have now enjoyed our afternoon tea – with cake kindly sent by Grace. Grace thought her cooking would be a failure but it wasn't. We are now waiting for the King's speech. After that we shall probably pay a few more calls.

Later. The King's message has just come over the air. Every word was as clear as though it was spoken in our own room. He hesitated considerably in the delivery of it but his words were encouraging. I pictured to myself all of you listening to it and also you having listened in the Union and also Uncle Willie and Aunt Hetty and Emmie in England. How wonderful it all is. Last evening we went along to give our greetings to the Besters who are here until Wednesday so I suppose we shall get into ours before Thursday or Friday which is disappointing. Fortunately they have let some work people make some improvements during the week so it will be easy for us to get settled as soon as we do start. We expect Freda will be our first visitor. We picture Eric being at Douglas' today as Freda is at Rooispruit.

I think we must have received close upon 200 Xmas cards already and about 30 letters. This is apart from official ones sent to me as Mayor. It is nice to be remembered by so many friends all over the country. I appreciate those sent by the family and grandchildren.

Later. After supper. We called to say goodbye to Ernest and three of the family who are going by car in the morning to Bushmans River. They have made a flat bottom boat which has been sent on before them. A couple of other calls has completed our day. No one has been to see us all day. We have missed the joyousness of the family circle but that could not be avoided. Mom has been writing to some of you so I may as well post this with hers. This may perhaps be our last letter from this address. We seem to run on "fours" in our addresses. Ours is 34, Joe's is 74 and Grace's is 84.

Wishing you all everything that is good for you in the New Year,  
Yours lovingly  
Dad

53a Bree Street  
Cradock  
Wednesday December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1937

My dear All,

This no doubt will be my last circle letter from this address and I hope to continue them from 34 Dundas Street as from tomorrow. I am glad that you find them of interest but I fear you are puzzled at times to make sense of them. I never seem to have time to re-read what I have written and I fear my typing is not improving. I find it difficult to judge the spacing with only one eye that is any good. However, if it gives you pleasure to receive them – such as they are – I shall continue to do the best I can.

I have already told you of our Xmas doings and we have already had news of how Joe and Blodwen spent the day before Xmas. No doubt we shall hear further news from one and another during the next few days. The postal service will be disorganised owing to the holidays.

Sunday was spent by us quietly at home. Mom was not feeling too grand in the morning so stayed in bed. I went to service as usual. I took the evening service and had what might have been a serious accident. My notes fell on the floor of the pulpit and picking them up, I struck my head on the corner of the reading desk. Fortunately it did not stun me but my head felt sore. It was only after the service was over that I found I had punctured my forehead but fortunately it had not bled very much. I still have a small scab just where the hair ought to be. It might have been much worse.

We are very disappointed not being able to move yesterday. The people are not able to get out of our house until this (Wednesday) afternoon and the cartage contractor says it will be about five this afternoon before he can start with us. However, I have borrowed a trek cat and am shifting as much as possible of the small stuff that will go into the garage as quickly as possible. I am putting my work bench and tools and the accumulation of odds and ends in the garage to be sorted out at leisure, when I get any. Everything is practically ready for the lorry but I expect we shall have to sleep here tonight. It has been some job getting down the curtain fixtures etc but I shall employ a man to fix them up in the new home. This flat looks terrible now that everything is dismantled. Matilda is working very well and I have an old man helping with the outside work.

On Monday we had a surprise visit from Freda, Rouena, Roslin, Hope and Freda's baby. I had been up to Aunt Eliza's with some letters and she said Freda and Co had just left to come down to see us. I hurried back but they did not arrive until quarter to one. They intended going straight out to Fish River as they had come in with Uncle Gervase's car and Freda was to return to Rooispruit that afternoon. However, we persuaded them all to stay to dinner. Matilda had just left to get ours before they arrived but as we always keep a supply of tinned food on hand in case of emergency, we were able to give them a good spread. They left again about half past two. It was very nice seeing Freda looking so well. Her baby was two years old yesterday. He looks like a girl. He was rather tired and cross but managed to have a sleep before they left. Of course the house was all upside down but that did not matter. They were pleased and so were we. Freda was looking to go back to Vryburg on Monday or Tuesday next. Eric was to spend Xmas with Douglas and Evelyn. She says the drought is very serious up there.

Afternoon. Have just been along to the house and two lorry loads have left so I expect the lorry will be along here pretty soon. We shall have some job to get straight but have extra help for a few days. The telephone was moved this morning.

Letter from Joe this morning says they had a happy Xmas.

Lots of love to all as though named,

Dad

Joe and Blodwen are coming for New Year.