

Dundas Street, Cradock  
Sunday February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

My last "Dear All" was dated December 27<sup>th</sup> 1938. This seems a very long time ago and much has happened since then which I should like to put on record but as most of you were with us during the intervening dates and as time is difficult to find to make a comprehensive diary of the holiday at East London, I suppose I shall have to be satisfied with the memory of the most enjoyable holiday we have ever had since our marriage.

A considerable amount of planning had been undertaken, including two visits to East London to spy out the land. We were disappointed at first when we could not get the place originally chosen but when we saw it when we visited the spot from Rock Cottages, we were very glad that we had not gone there. The bathing at Naheen Mouth was not comparable with the lagoon and sea at Rockcliff. The accommodation also was not comparable. We were all very thankful to Una and her husband for having inspected Rockcliff for us.

Joe and I will not forget the journey by car down and passing the train in which Mom, Grace and her children were in near Fort Beaufort. Joe too will not forget his lonely journey back to Bloemfontein. How we wished he could have stayed the whole of the time with us. Of course we missed Blodwen and the two children but were glad to know they had a good time with her people at Cape Town. Ted we also missed as the change no doubt would have done him a lot of good. Better luck next time. Then there was the added pleasure of having Aunt Emmie, Joyce and Raymond with us for about a week which was not included in the original scheme. We are glad to know that the change appears to have done all of us a lot of good. Unfortunately Raymond has developed chicken pox since his return to Cape Town but I do not think Rockcliff was responsible for that.

No one will forget the birthday picnic on 11<sup>th</sup> in town and the impromptu concert in the evening. It was very naughty of you to have gone to the expense of making these presents. We very much appreciate the kindly thought that prompted the gifts but they must have added considerably to your expenses.

And what shall I say about the lagoon? It was a perfect paradise for the children. How they did enjoy bathing at all times of the day and I think all of them claimed that they had learned the art of swimming and diving during the holiday. The fun the air mattress that Reg and Dot brought down caused no end of fun.

The fishing expeditions were notable for their failure. Perhaps the few enthusiasts will change their hobby to something else likely to bring them more enjoyment. The tragedy of the visitor from Benoni being washed off the rocks nearby and drowned cast a gloom over the last few days of our stay.

The "braaivleis" evening and trip to Kidds Beach were much enjoyed. How the little-ees ran down the sand dunes! It was great fun watching them. The trips to town for marketing and incidentally (?) to get the post was almost daily occurrences. Here let me say how well all the ladies provided for our creature comforts. No one went hungry. Puddings did not trouble us and there was fruit in abundance. To see the pile of twenty-four plates to be served each meal took some doing. We certainly could not have managed meals without the big tent. John did the cooking very well – with the assistance of the ladies of course. Mrs Hudson spent a few days with us and added to the pleasure of the party. We are not likely to forget the crowd of visitors who came out on Sunday afternoons. It was quite a reunion of old Vryburg friends. Quite a number of snaps were taken and in due course I hope to send a set to each home. I must not forget the wreck. This happened about 15 months ago. Being quite close to land – or rather on the rocks – it was a constant sight of interest watching the waves pound the vessel. It now lies in four different pieces and in course of time will all disappear. The trip up the river must not be forgotten as also the visit to the warships in the harbour.

I am sorry all the party were not present when we visited the East London park. The children were particularly interested in the monkeys which run about all over the place but are

quite tame and friendly. It was great fun feeding them, the children remarking how smooth the monkeys' hands were. Three monkeys jumped into Reg's car and one jumped onto my shoulder. The baby monkeys were a great attraction.

The weather was exceedingly kind to us. It was not excessively hot any part of the time and we enjoyed sitting out in the evenings without extra wraps. No one caught colds and the health of the camp was perfectly good. Unfortunately Grace had a nasty cold which she brought with her from Kroonstad. I wanted her to consult our doctor here but she thought it would get better. It didn't. So she consulted Mrs Hudson's doctor who specialises in throat, ear and mouth troubles. He operated twice a week on her nose for three weeks and I hope has successfully stopped any further trouble.

We had a little rain on the Sunday before we left but not enough to keep us in. Monday was much the same but on Tuesday – the day we actually closed the camp – it kept on all day. It rained all the way up to Cradock but not sufficiently to make travelling dangerous. Reg, John and I arrived home on Tuesday evening after seeing Grace off by the morning train direct to Kroonstad. Mom, Dot and the two little boys came by train with Mom arriving here Wednesday morning. I should have recorded the fact that Joe and Grace fetched Ruth and Denis from Hamburg – about 60 miles from East London and Reg, Dot and Mrs Hudson took them back to Grahamstown when their time was up. Douglas, Evelyn took Rex to Grahamstown and Cecily, leaving Rex at Kingswood School. Arthur took Lynne and Kingsley back to Vryburg via Cradock, Rooispruit, Kimberley and Eric. Unfortunately they lost their dog "Patches" at Warrenton. We were all pleased to hear before Ruth and Denis left that Denis had passed first class in his matric examination. We are expecting them here on their way back from Ladybrand, where they have been visiting Milner Brown. Douglas, Evelyn and Cecily got home via Rooispruit (after calling at Cradock). We had not returned by then – dropping the twins at Eric's on the way. Perhaps I did not mention that Douglas traded in his lorry at East London for a new Ford truck which Arthur drove home.

I was sorry not to have been home when Douglas and Co were here and also sorry that I only had two days here with Reg and Dot before having to leave for Cape Town on Saturday. They took Mom as far as Uncle Gervase's on Monday morning and got as far as Kroonstad the same evening. Leaving there in the morning, they had to return to Kroonstad owing to bad weather and only got to their home on Friday afternoon instead of Wednesday as expected.

I had a busy time in Cape Town attending meetings. Saw a few old friends and left again on Wednesday evening arriving here Thursday night. Mom had returned by car the same morning with Roslin who has been sitting for another exam.

We have much to be thankful that our holiday has passed off so well and without accident. I hope it will always be a happy memory to you all. It was a great pleasure to us to see so many of the family so happy together.

1939 has opened with dark clouds over the world but I hope that war may be averted. We hear of two interesting events being expected in the family circle during the year. May all go well in each case.

I must really close now, hoping to be able to keep up my regular weekly epistle. You will note I have started with new carbon paper.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

## Rockcliff on Sea Holiday 1938



Ruth Butler, Reg Hudson, Evelyn Butler  
Charles & Emma Butler



Back Row: ?, Mr Jim Florence, Una Shingler, Nellie Bowley, Mrs (Helen) Effie Florence.  
Behind Nellie, Mrs Rickett, Ruth Butler, David & Harold Irons, Grace Irons, Emma  
Butler, ?, Denis Butler, Charles Butler, Reg Hudson  
Front row: John Shingler with baby David, Dot Hudson with ?, Jean Irons with Alan  
Hudson in front ? with baby, Norman Hudson, Pamela Irons



Standing: Kingsley Butler, Norman Hudson,  
Harold Irons, Rex Butler, David & Pamela Irons  
Seated: Denis & Arthur Butler  
Front: Alan Hudson, Jean Irons, Cicely Butler



Jean Irons, Cicely Butler,  
Pam Irons



Jean Irons, Norman Hudson,  
Cicely Butler, Alan Hudson



Joe & Douglas Butler "shaving"  
Grandpa Charles



Back row, standing: Evelyn Butler, Denis Butler, Ruth Butler, Douglas Butler, Lynne Butler, Rex  
Butler, Arthur Butler, Grace Irons, David Irons & Harold Irons  
Middle row: Joe Butler, Reg Hudson, Emma Butler, Charles Butler with Ray Townshend on his lap,  
Dot Hudson  
Front: Pam Irons, Cecily Butler, Alan Hudson, Kingsley Butler, Norman Hudson, Jean Irons

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I am trying to get back to my original day for posting my circle letter but as I wrote on Sunday last, you will not expect a long epistle again today.

We are glad to get letters from Dot telling of their experiences in getting home from Kroonstad. We truly may all be thankful for journeying mercies vouchsafed to each and all of us. Only last week I travelled over the line where the recent railway accident occurred in which five people lost their lives. Reg and Dot, instead of getting home on Tuesday as they planned, they only arrived on Friday afternoon. They have had a very warm welcome from their numerous friends.

Joe reports good rains in Bloemfontein but finds he cannot get much to grow in their garden. There are trees apparently all round the ground and the soil is of clayey nature. He took up a bag of sea sand in his car for ballast.

We are expecting Ruth and Denis here on Monday morning. They go on to Grahamstown on Tuesday to settle Denis in at Rhodes University and after that, Ruth will come back to commence work on March 1<sup>st</sup>. We have offered her to stay with us if she likes for the present.

Mom and I went to see Snow White at the bio yesterday afternoon. It is a wonderful production.

Tuesday evening I had to open a bazaar and braaivleis in the Show yard buildings on behalf of the Women's Agricultural Society. It had been raining more or less all day so the attendance was not as large as might have been but nevertheless they took over £50.

The same morning I had a deputation of about 130 to 150 native women who object to the Council's decision to run a Municipal beer hall in the location. They threaten to boycott the hall if we go on with it. The same thing has been happening all over the country but experience has shown that when properly run, it is a great success. The Council will not give way in the matter.

On Monday the Government Inspector of Aerodromes came to see the new one we have made and has passed same as being first class. We are hoping that this will mean that in the near future the area mails will be brought here – at present the planes go from Johannesburg via Graaff Reinet.

Something has gone wrong with the typewriter, hence the blank space.

Did I tell you that the two following days after our return from East London, John did not turn up. Friday he was here and I left on Saturday morning for Cape Town. He told Mom that he was not working any more and left on the spot. He has gone to Queenstown with his wife and family. Matilda is still working very well. She comes about  $\frac{3}{4}$  past seven in the morning.

I am having a meeting today to make plans for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cradock and the entertainment of the Governor General and Lady Duncan. We expect them about June.

I am glad to report that we have registered close on five inches of rain this year and that for the first time, all my seven tanks are full. We are using only rainwater for baths and cooking etc. I am also trying to make arrangements for someone to take over the garden on their own account. If I have opportunity of selling the house, we may do so. A party was here yesterday who would like to rent it for a year but that would not be any advantage to us.

Aunt Emmie will be 73 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month.

We have had letters from Lynne and Kingsley thanking us for the nice holiday. If any of you have any further accounts for payment that were not included, please let me have them as soon as possible.

We are both well and hope all the families are also well.

Much love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1939

My dear All,

Writing the date reminds me that February is a big month for birthdays. Florrie Bigg's eldest son, John Collett, was 21 on 16<sup>th</sup>. Pam Irons too on 17<sup>th</sup>, Ernest's Christine was 19 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Aunt Hetty, Uncle John's wife, was 85 on 21<sup>st</sup>, Aunt Nelly (Uncle Willie's wife) was 76 on 22<sup>nd</sup> and Aunt Emma is 73 today. Evelyn will be 47 on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup>. Aunt Emmie's Muriel was 35 on 12<sup>th</sup>. It was 11 years on 16<sup>th</sup> that Uncle John passed away and 39 years on 21<sup>st</sup> and 49 years on 24<sup>th</sup> that my Mother and Father respectively passed over.

The only thing we have missed since our return is the illuminated card we had in the hall entitled "the home beautiful". The pin on which it was suspended is still in its place. Does anyone know anything about it?

I have sent all the snaps taken at the camp to Evelyn and asked her to superintend the getting of prints some for each household and I want each of you to have a set for keeps. This will take some time but I think it is the best way to do it. Eventually the owners of the negatives will get theirs back.

Ruth and Denis arrived on Monday after spending a few days with Joe and Blodwen. Denis stayed with one of his school chums. They left again on Tuesday morning for Grahamstown and Ruth expects to be back here on Monday or Tuesday. We offered her free accommodation with us if she cared to have it. We thought it would save her money and would be company for Mom as I am often out in the evenings.. We intended her having the room next to the bathroom and to keep the other for a spare room. We can quite understand that she prefers to be independent and make her own friends. We shall of course see a good deal of her. We are very pleased to hear that Denis has been awarded a Municipal bursary by the Grahamstown Council and another by Rhodes University. I understand from Ruth that he is now provided for the full time he will be at Rhodes. This is very satisfactory and a great encouragement to Ruth.

I do not know if I told you in my last that Grass Ridge dam is full – this is only the third time this has happened since the dam was constructed. This will, I think, ensure a good supply for the town for the next three years. We are of course going on with the construction of the new storage reservoir on our commonage.

At Fish River service last Sunday, Aunt Jessie was publicly thanked for her long service as Organist – fifty-six years (56). A silver plate is to be affixed to the organ which she gave to the church commemorating the fact. Aunt Kate Dudley now officiates.

We are sorry to hear that Grace's Harold has boils on his neck. Otherwise they seem to be well.

Tuesday night. I had a bad attack of indigestion but am glad to say has passed over now. I had had two heavy days on committee work from 9.20 am to six pm and was over tired.

The Show Carnival promises to be a great success. We are hoping the Governor General will be here for the Show. A proposal is coming up at next Tuesday's Council meeting that the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Cradock should be marked by the introduction of a mayoral robe. Needless to say the suggestion does not emanate from me.

Our figs and grapes are fairly ripe. Will each of you let me know by return if you think it worthwhile sending some to you.

I am glad to note that you find the new carbon paper I am using is giving better results.

Denis looks to come here for the Easter holidays. We also hope that Rex will be able to come.

No more now. Love from  
Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

First let me say that Winnie (Uncle Jack's daughter) who was poisoned through eating mushrooms, was brought into hospital on Monday and is making good progress towards recovery. It appears that the family had mushrooms for breakfast and no one was any the worse of it until the afternoon. It was a very hot day and Winnie had a drink of lemon syrup and immediately collapsed. They thought she had fainted. After working with her for some time, they phoned for Enid who went up at once and saw how serious was the position and phoned in for the doctor. Enid by that time was black and her pulse had stopped. Enid did not know what was the cause but gave her something to make her vomit. When doctor arrived, the river was down and he had to walk over the bridge (railway) and was motored from there. He at once gave her some injections. He said if he had been ten minutes later she would have passed away. She was quite paralysed on her right side and unable to speak. She could not be moved until this week. We saw her yesterday and am glad to say she is much better now. She can talk a little and move her arm. I mention this matter in detail so as to put all of you on your guard. Mushrooms are very dangerous. One bad one was the cause of the trouble. They are certainly best left alone.

On Saturday afternoon we had a surprise visit from Dora Forbes, her married daughter and her little boy. Dora stayed with her with us. She has a granddaughter at Rocklands. Mom and Dora are of course cousins and in their young days, often took part in concerts etc. They left again after dinner on Sunday for Burghersdorp where they live. When we returned from a walk to see Aunt Charlotte, we were surprised to find their luggage on the front stoep and at once knew that something had happened. Finding our house shut, they had gone to the Poplars. It transpired that on their journey they stopped the car in order to pick some prickly pears and had not applied the handbrake sufficiently with the consequence that the car ran backwards and landed in a donga, damaging the machinery that it was not wise to proceed. Two motorists had stopped and helped them and brought them and the car back to town. They left again about dinner time on Monday.

We have been asked by a lady if we will let her our house for a year furnished but we are not entertaining it – what should we do? If she wanted to buy it, we would consider it.

Joe is the only one so far who thinks it worthwhile sending them fruit. We have sent a box weighing about 15 pounds of grapes and figs and hope to hear they arrived in fair order. Our grapes are not nearly as nice as they were last year. Perhaps they have had too much rain this season.

We have had very nice appreciative letters from most of the children and grandchildren respecting the camp. Am glad to see that Rex has settled down so nicely at Kingswood. Denis too is hard at work at the University. Ruth arrived on Monday morning and is settled in at the Masonic Hotel and started work yesterday.

At the Council meeting on Tuesday evening, they decided to purchase a Mayoral robe in commemoration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Cradock. It will have to be imported from England and they want it to arrive in time for the Governor General's visit, the date of which is not definitely fixed. We hope he may come at the Show time in April.

We have a boy working in the garden but I fear he is not too good.

Postcard from Blodwen today says the grapes and figs arrived quite useless. They had been crushed to pulp and were fermenting. I fear that it will be useless sending more for which I am sorry. Perhaps we will send some apples later.

I am glad to say we are both keeping well and are glad to hear good news from the various homes. We are going to the bio tomorrow evening to see a picture Ruth strongly recommends. She will go with us.

Love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

You will be glad to know that Winnie Brown is making progress towards recovery. She is not able to speak properly but the paralysis on her right side is less pronounced. She is likely to be kept in hospital for another week or so.

Those of you who know Mr Metcalf, who passed his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday on the first of this month, is very ill. He had an attack of bronchitis in February and thought a change to East London would do him good. He got worse and returned to Cradock on the 1<sup>st</sup> instant and has been in bed ever since. Yesterday afternoon his daughter phoned to me asking if I could get into touch with Mary who has always been a great friend of the family. I wired to her at Verulum where she is supposed to be staying with Miss Warner. So far no reply has come. They have two nurses attending him and local doctors have held a consultation. Dr Sands, Mr Metcalf's son-in-law, is expected to fly from Cape Town this morning. It is too early (before seven) to enquire how the patient is today but will of course find out before posting. For a long time I have spoken of Mr Metcalf "as public benefactor No. 1". There is no cause of public interest but what he is to the fore in giving moral and financial assistance. He will be sadly missed if he passes out at this stage. He lives close to us in the double story house.

We continue to receive very appreciative letters from one and another respecting the recent holiday. We must look forward to another some time if we are spared. I think we should all like to go to the same place again.

I am so glad to hear that Douglas' dog, Patches, has been recovered.

Mr Lutge writes that all four cottages are let for Easter. His wife is much better in health.

Miss Weekey, who was matron of Kimberley Hospital for some years and retired on pension, wired me last week wanting to know if Mary would take her temporary position as Matron at a mission hospital near King William's Town. I have not heard if anything is happening in that direction. It seems that Mary is in great demand. I know she is wanted at Port Elizabeth for public work there.

As the Governor General cannot come to open the Show (April 19/20), the Admiral of the Fleet at Simon's Town has accepted the invite. It has also been decided to celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cradock on the same occasion. A big carnival is being arranged for the 20<sup>th</sup>. We are also trying to arrange for the official opening of the new aerodrome on the day previous so you will see that we are in for a hectic time. I am supposed to go to Oudtshoorn for the Mayoral Congress which opens there on April 17<sup>th</sup> and lasts for three days. I do not see how it can be done unless I go by air but I think it will have to be cut out as there will be so many functions here where I shall be expected to put in an appearance.



Mary

Later. Mr Metcalf had to have injections about four this a.m. He is suffering greatly.

Ruth had her first game of bowls yesterday and I hear did wonderfully well. Pam had a nasty fall from her bike recently, hurting her knees and elbows. Douglas has shipped a number of cattle overseas and another lot of over 100 have been selected to go in about three months time.

I am trying to get into touch with Mary as the Metcalfs want her to come and help with the nursing of Mr Metcalf. I can't find out exactly where she is.

We are both well. The weather is very hot again.

Lots of love to all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday March 16<sup>th</sup> 1939

My dear All,

You will be glad to hear that Winnie is going home today. Not that she is quite well but is getting better. She frets for home and as Enid is there, it is thought that it will be safe for her to go. She cannot speak properly yet but understands all that is said to her. She is quite bright and we all hope that she will gradually recover the use of her arm and speech. It is fortunate that Harvey has had his mother staying with him all the time and has been able to look after the two children at home. The eldest, a girl, is away at Queenstown boarding school.

Did I tell you that Dudley Townshend lost his motorcar? It appears he and Joyce had been to a bio and whilst they were having refreshments after the show, the car was stolen. Five days after, it was found abandoned at the docks, fortunately undamaged.

I am glad to say I have at last finished answering my Xmas letters. It has been rather a long job but being away all January threw me out of time. It is very nice to keep in touch with old friends. Joe remarks upon the number of letters I write. My postages run into about 8/- to 15/- per month.

Am sorry to see by the papers that malaria is very bad in Potgietersrus and I hope that Reg and Dot and the children will not contract it. They are welcome to come away to us if they wish. We do not get it here.

We are glad to hear that Mrs Hudson was well enough to go back home to Vryburg. We were hoping she would stay with us on the way but as she had a lift by car as far as Bloemfontein, she gladly took it.

What lots of rain the country has been having. Douglas says they have had more than enough for the present. I have written to enquire how the Colletts at Unzuku have fared as I noticed that their river had risen sixty feet. I should think that would wash everything away. I also notice that a family of Irons at Creighton has suffered heavy losses – evidently on the same river. I know some of Ted's people were farming there.

We had a very cold snap on Tuesday night, only nine degrees above freezing, I expect there was frost further out. Our figs and grapes are still alright, they are not as good as last year.

David and Harold are to have their first experience of Scout camp life this weekend. I guess they will enjoy it. One of Ted's tanks sprung a leak so that was another job for him to mend. It is fortunate all of you seem very handy in that way. Surely you must take after me!

So sorry to hear that poor little Roy has been in the wars again. It is just about a year since he was run over by a motorcar. This time he got his finger crushed in the hood of their motorcar. He does seem unfortunate. Hope there is no permanent injury.

Ruth has taken up bowls and plays on Wednesday afternoons and sometimes in the evening by electric light. She is an expert at the game and will be a great acquisition to Cradock. Denis is getting on nicely at Rhodes. Guy was up for the weekend and says he is studying hard.

Olive Collett is back from a long holiday. She had been staying with Mrs Jones who lost her husband about Xmas time. Mrs Jones is Ruby Adendorf's sister. He died of consumption, a very sad case. Olive and Alex's wife had dinner with us yesterday and George and Hilda had supper here. Mary is also with us as she is nursing Mr Metcalf who is still very ill. After spending nearly a £1 in phone trunk calls, we managed to find her in Maritzburg and she came at once by air to Port Elizabeth and train here at the request and expense of the Metcalfs. She is taking night duty and as this house is much quieter than the Poplars, she sleeps here by day. She is looking very well. We hope Mr Metcalf will recover. He is over 86.

On Tuesday morning Mom and Aunt Jessie accompanied me to the Boys School where Mr Weavers and I spoke regarding Uncle Herbert's bursary. Mom unveiled the photo which had been suitably written upon. The hall was filled and the function went off very satisfactorily. If it is reported in the Midland News, I will send you each a copy. I suppose you are not getting the paper still as I told them to stop sending them at the end of January as you said you did not get time to read it.

Love to all, Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

From now and through the winter, I shall have to have the electric light on when I start my letter at six a.m. It is quite cool now first thing but gets quite warm during the day. It is quite nice sitting and writing out on the back stoep.

Am glad to say Winnie is still making progress. It will be a long time before she can speak properly and regain the full use of her right hand.

Evelyn has kindly seen to the printing and distribution of the snaps taken at East London. If any of you have more than you want or duplicates, I can make use of them. I hope they will always remind you of the happy time we had together.

Denis celebrated his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday on 21<sup>st</sup> and David has a birthday on 31<sup>st</sup>. Then there is Joe and Blodwen's and Reg and Dot's wedding day also on 31<sup>st</sup>. Many happy returns of the day to all concerned. Sorry to hear that Grace and Hal have had colds again and are under inoculation treatment for same. Ted's brother at Creighton suffered severely from storm damages on his farm recently. He reckons £500 won't cover it. He was about to sell the property.

Reg and Dot are planning to spend Easter with Grace and Ted and we hope it comes off. We are wondering if we will take a run as far as Bloemfontein for the long weekend at Easter as we have not seen their new home there. Perhaps we might run on to Kroonstad for a day or so as we have not seen the improvements made since they returned to the plot. Of course we could run out to the farm if we want to.

Dot says the malaria outbreak in their area is greatly exaggerated in the press. There has only been one case in their dorp so far. The natives in the district are suffering considerably and there have been many deaths. Reg and Gilbert motored to Johannesburg last week and got bogged in the mud. It seems that the rivers were very sluggish in these parts and do not run off like ours do. They had to get a gang of natives to help them out.

We received a note from Douglas on Tuesday saying he might be popping in on us on Wednesday night. Sure enough, about seven last evening he and his neighbour George Metcalf turned up. Metcalf is related to our Mr Metcalf and naturally wanted to see him. He is going along after breakfast. The old gentleman is slowly getting better and may be allowed to sit up for a short while in a few days. Mary is still on night duty and comes here to sleep about nine. She generally goes for a walk or calls on someone before turning in. She does not sleep too well but is looking very well. I have not seen Mr Metcalf since his illness but of course enquire daily how he is. Douglas has come to buy bulls at a sale in Middelburg on Friday and is addressing a meeting of farmers at Roi Spruit this afternoon on exportation of cattle. He has to be back on the farm on Saturday as he and Evelyn are giving a farewell party to Mr and Mrs Webster who are being transferred to the bank here. They did the journey from Vryburg – a little over 400 miles – in 13 hours, including stoppages. Douglas is looking very well – still smokes more than is good for him I think and reports all well at home and at school. Rex is looking forward to a month's holiday in April. Kingswood School only has three terms in the year.

We had a morning tea party at Mrs Stock's yesterday and have to attend a farewell to the School Inspector at Rocklands tomorrow. We had a full day on Saturday and Sunday with a local preachers' convention. Rev Douglas' son, Roderick from Middelburg stayed with us. There are plenty of other engagements to be kept in the near future. I wonder if the Admiral will be able to come to open the Show in April owing to the critical situation in Europe.

Matilda came to work a few days ago with her face bandaged. It appears she was assaulted by another woman in her house. She has had to change her quarters. Aunt Eliza's knees are troubling her again. She is always very active but never goes off her premises. It is breakfast time so must stop.

Later. Douglas and Metcalf are off just now via Katkop and Rooispruit.

Love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

We have decided to spend Easter with Joe and Blodwen and have booked our seats to leave here by night train on Saturday April 1<sup>st</sup>. We are due at Bloemfontein about 8.30 a.m. Sunday. Joe will meet us. We shall probably return about 10<sup>th</sup> April. We can do with a rest before the festivities begin. We may need another rest after they are over but we will see about that later on. We had hoped to see Reg and Dot as well but Dot writes that owing to malaria being so bad in the Northern Transvaal, the Government has decided not to have the usual school holidays now but later. They fear that if children are scattered over the country, where malaria is very bad, it would be dangerous. There have only been one or two cases in Potgietersrus so far so we hope it is a good move to stay at home. Grace will be very disappointed but perhaps they will go later. Blodwen's sister, who has been working at Kodaks for about 15 years, has resigned owing to her health not being good. She will be going to Blodwen's for May.

Douglas and his neighbour, George Metcalf, spent last Wednesday night with us and left again about 10.30 for Uncle Owen's. They also gave Joe and Blodwen a late call on their way back to Vryburg but only stayed about an hour. Douglas was in a hurry to get home as they were giving a farewell to the bank manager who has been transferred to Cradock. Metcalf is a cousin to our Mr Metcalf. I am glad to report that Mr Metcalf is making a wonderful recovery, Mary says he will never be the same as he was. Mary does not think it necessary for him to have two nurses any longer.

We were glad to hear of the safe arrival of a son to Reg's sister, Trixie, on 20<sup>th</sup>. Hope mother and babe are doing well.

Cecily will be eight on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Aunt Letty celebrated her 57<sup>th</sup> wedding day last Tuesday.

Mom is entertaining the W.C.T.U. here this afternoon. We do not know how many will attend. Tomorrow evening we have to announce the result of the selection of the candidate for competition for the position of Wool Queen for the Eastern Province. The same evening I have to attend a farewell dinner to the school inspector who is transferred to Uitenhage.

All Grace's children except Pam have been in dentist's hands lately. Some have too many teeth etc. Miss Kicks, a very kind neighbour of hers, is going to give the children music lessons.

The news over the air this morning to the effect that the Civil War in Spain is practically over is good news indeed. One wonders what the next excitement is likely to be. Germany says she is satisfied so far but evidently Poland is in an unsettled state.

We have received news this morning that we may expect 20 aeroplanes to land here on Good Friday. We shall not be here but may see them in Bloemfontein.

Dennis is due here on Thursday evening 6<sup>th</sup> April. He will sleep here and have meals with Ruth at the hotel. We look to be back on Tuesday or Wednesday after Easter.

Hope you are all well and that we shall hear from you whilst we are away. Letters are always looked for.

Lots of love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

My fingers feel a little stiff this early morning and out of practice as I missed writing last week owing, of course, to our being at Bloemfontein. However, I sent each of you a few cards to report our arrival etc. Out of the nine days we were away, two were Sundays and two were public holidays so we saw a good deal of Joe which we should not have done had we gone at any other time. Am glad to say all seemed very well and hearty. The children are full of beans and everything attracts their attention. We went for several motor trips in and around the town. The city is growing rapidly and a very nice style of houses are being built. We had the pleasure of attending the installation of their new Mayor and Mayoress and being shown over their new and magnificent Town Hall. Their gardens are the envy of all municipalities. We met Rev Jennings' two married daughters in the park with their children and a number of friends were invited to the house to meet us. Rev and Mrs Piper and the Ibbs family were amongst them. An evening was spent with the Fergusons and they spent one with us. You will remember Mr Ibbs used to visit us frequently in Vryburg and he was in Kuruman when Harold died. He and Blodwen sang a number of songs during the evening. I have never heard Blodwen sing better. Rev Piper lived in Cradock for two or three years as a candidate for the ministry. He has not become a supernumerary and lives at Walmer. One of their married daughters is living in Bloemfontein. They will spend a night here on their way south during May. We also called to see Bill Lester, one of the boys who stayed with us at the YMCA at Observatory. He is married and has two children.

I found the altitude rather depressing (1700 feet higher than Cradock) and I was off colour and food for 36 hours. Mom also was upset on Bank Holiday and we had to forego our trip to Marselspoort, much to the disappointment of the children. Under the circumstances, we thought it best to return that evening instead of Tuesday, as originally planned. We are both back to normal now and hope to keep so over the festivities in the near future. Mary occupied the house all the while we were away and everything was alright on our return. Denis is staying with Ruth at the hotel until Saturday when he comes to us for the rest of his holiday. I am going over to the station on Monday morning next to see Rex as he passes through to Vryburg for his first holiday. We invited him to stay over for the festivities but could hardly expect him to do so.

We have not had frost yet but autumn undoubtedly is with us. I wish you could see the Virginia creeper now, it is a sight.

I attended a dinner given to welcome the new School Inspector and to say farewell to the old one. Mr Aucamp has been transferred here from Vryburg area. We have not yet met Mr and Mrs Webster from Vryburg. Douglas and Evelyn gave them a farewell party at the farm and entertained one hundred guests. Some party!

We were sorry to miss attending Coly Macintosh's wedding. It would have been nice to have seen him again.

Last Saturday (8<sup>th</sup>) was the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Harold and Ruth's wedding. No doubt you remembered it.

We were sorry not to see Grace and family but the time was too short to make a round of visits. We had a phone conversation one evening and am glad to know all's well in that quarter. Blodwen too is keeping very well under trying circumstances.

Mary has applied for a position in a "TB" nursing home in Port Elizabeth and goes down next Monday on "approbation". It has been very nice having her here. Mr Metcalf is so much better that he will be able to do without a nurse.

It is nearly breakfast time and as I have a heavy day today, must not attempt another sheet. Am glad to have had news from you during the time we have been away. We are thankful for journeying mercies and to know that all's well in each home. Hoping to hear from you all soon,

Lots of love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I do not know how far I shall be able to get with this week's letter but will try to get it off as usual. We are in the midst of the festivities. Have seen the Admiral off this morning but no doubt all the details of the week will be duly recorded in the Midland News. I will send a copy to each family in due course. I can say that so far everything has gone off according to plan. The weather has been delightful and no accidents have been reported so far.

Uncle Dudley and Aunt Kate are staying with us. They have been up to the Johannesburg show. They did not associate Kroonstad with Grace and Ted or would have tried to see them. They went by train.

We have both stood the strain very well so far but we shall be glad when it is all over. The Mayoral robe arrived just in time, on Monday morning and is a gorgeous garment, with cockade. It will be very hot to wear in summer but of course will only be worn on state occasions. The next big function will be when the Governor General visits us. The Carnival is on this evening.

I saw the Admiral off this morning at about seven and he says had has enjoyed every minute of the visit.

After dinner. We have had four extra to dinner and it will be quite impossible to finish this, this afternoon but will send it all the same as I do not like Thursday to pass without sending greetings. The Carnival starts about four and we have to be there and shall not be home I expect before 11 pm.

Very dear love to all and thanks for letters received from one and other, will answer them as soon as possible.

Yours with love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

Last week I was only able to send a very short letter so I must try to do better this week. I have already sent to each of you a copy of the last three issues of the Midland News. On each page of same I think there must be some news regarding recent events in which we have had to take a part. I hope you will be interested in same. Consequently I need not repeat what has already appeared in print. Suffice it to say that everything went off "according to plan". I shall try to get some copies of snaps that were taken by various spectators which will be interesting to pass round.

I cannot send a sample of the Mayoral robe and cockade but may say that it is a very fine garment and I am informed is the same material and pattern as worn by the Lord Mayor of London.

Thursday morning. I was only able to get so far yesterday and must hurry on. It was bitterly cold yesterday and we had our first fire in the dining room. I forgot when we had our first last year. We attended the presentation of tennis prizes in the afternoon but it was so cold, Mom soon returned. I watched croquet players for some time. We still have our mallets but have not played.

Mom has had her hair waved for the Show and it looks very nice. I hope she will keep it up.

I called on Douglas' friend, Mr Webster, at his office recently. He said they were coming to see us but one of the children had developed chickenpox so had to put off the call. We had a good many visitors during the Show and Carnival. Three of them won prizes. Mom won a second prize on the Show for a new tea tray she worked. We were very tired after the Show etc so on Sunday, I had breakfast and dinner in bed, a thing I have not done for years. I have had a certain amount of internal trouble and if it does not yield to treatment pretty soon, shall consult the doctor. I have tried fasting for a few days and it seems a little better.

As Mayor, I have been invited to attend the Graduation Ceremony at Rhodes University, Grahamstown on Saturday morning. I shall go by train on Friday night and return by Monday morning. Ernest's son, Guy, is to be "capped". Ernest and Alison celebrate their Silver Wedding next month. Uncle Willie's son, Phil, who lost his wife a couple of years ago, is marrying her sister on 6<sup>th</sup> May. I saw Rex as he passed through on his way home for a month's holiday recently. He has put on eight pounds this quarter at Kingswood. He is working hard on the farm and finds his hands blister very quickly. Denis spent some of his holiday with us and part at the hotel with Ruth. I shall see him on Saturday.

Mary has not got the position she applied for at Port Elizabeth. She is at Aunt Jessie's at present as they phoned to say she was not well. However they are coming into town tomorrow. Hilda Collett's daughter will stay with Mom whilst I am away. Mrs Legg wrote inviting me over to Graaff Reinet for the election of the Wool Queen but I could not go – was too busy here. We heard her son singing over the wireless a week or so ago.

On Tuesday afternoon we are entertaining about two hundred ladies in the Town Hall to meet delegates attending the Methodist Women's Annual Convention. I hope the function passes off nicely.

It is quite cold in the mornings now and Matilda is coming later than usual. One cannot expect them early as they have a long way to come from the location. I am typing this by electric light. We do not have breakfast till about half past eight now. I have to go to the station presently to meet Senator Malan who is passing through. Had a very nice letter from the Admiral thanking for the good time he had here. We are expecting the Governor General will be our next important visitor, probably in June.

Uncle Owen turned up by car from Vryburg on Tuesday and went on to Port Elizabeth the same night to be with Aunt Kate and Beryl. The latter has not been at all well lately. They are thinking of going on a sea trip to Durban before visiting us. Love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I am a day ahead of posting this morning and hope to be able to finish in good time. It has been a busy week and an enjoyable one. The Council considered that they should be represented at the Rhodes University College Graduation Ceremony on Saturday morning so I went down by train on Friday evening (11 pm) arriving there at seven the next morning. It was a bitterly cold there first thing but warmed up later. The ceremony was impressive and well carried out. Ernest's Guy was amongst the hundred or more who were "capped". Denis was amongst the crowd of students but I suppose it will be a matter of another three years before he is capped. Ernest, Alison and Mary motored down for the event and went on to Port Elizabeth for the weekend and incidentally to see Christine off on holiday to Durban by boat. They only got back after four p.m. on Monday. Mary saw Mrs Garnett in Grahamstown. I was invited to lunch with the Senate and Council of the University but had to leave the table before the meal was finished so as to catch my return train at 2.10 back to Cradock. I arrived home at 11 pm. George Collett's daughter, Amy, stayed with Mom for the time I was away. I am glad that I went as I met quite a number of influential men. On Sunday morning Mom and I attended the Dutch Reformed Church and in the evening, the Church of England. This was a friendly gesture which was apparently much appreciated. Monday afternoon the quests attending the Methodist Women's Association Conference arrived. We are entertaining the President and Secretary, Mrs Neal and Mrs Cragg respectively. The latter is a niece of our Mr Gush in Cape Town. They are both very friendly and appear to be enjoying their visit. In the afternoon we gave an official welcome to the delegates in the Town Hall at which about 150, including visitors, were present. The function went off very nicely, some country members of the church came in specially for the occasion. In the evening I had a Council meeting to attend. Our visitors will be leaving tomorrow morning. Rev and Mrs Barnes were in attendance. They were sorry to hear of Uncle Willie's death. Uncle met them on their arrival in Liverpool when they went on holiday round the world two or three years ago.

We have not actually had frost yet but the mornings are quite cold. I sit in my dressing gown and do my work. The weather during the day is perfect. Leaves are falling rapidly.

It is Dot's birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> and Alan's on the 19<sup>th</sup>. He will be six then and he is looking forward to going to school next quarter. Ernest and Alison celebrate their Silver Wedding on 14<sup>th</sup>. It was 52 years ago on 27<sup>th</sup> of April that I left London for Cradock. It took just a month from door to door. I came across some verses that Aunt Emmie had placed in my bag in the cabin and I only found them after they had said goodbye. The writing was only in pencil but I have sent them back to her to see. The title was "The reason why" and were very appropriate to the occasion. Perhaps I will repeat them in my circle letter when the original comes back from Cape Town.

We had a nice letter from Trixie. She seems very happy with her new born treasure. It was so nice that old Mrs Tyson lived to hear the news of the baby's safe arrival. She passed away a few days after.

Our visitors are leaving tomorrow morning. They are both very nice. Mom has attended some of the meetings. Thursday afternoon. Our visitors left this morning and we are back to normal. It will take a little while before I can catch up with my correspondence but will do my best. Letters have come from all except Vryburg but we always make excuses for them as they get their post so irregularly. We should soon hear if there was anything amiss. I hear Mrs Moolman is definitely leaving Cradock and opening a cafe in Port Elizabeth. Rev and Mrs Piper are coming to spend a night with us next week on their way back to Walmer from Bloemfontein. Their daughter has another son.

Did you see the total eclipse of the moon last night? I saw part of it. Eileen Gretton, now Mrs (Rev Duxbury) was here at the meetings. She enquired after Lee and Dot. Our two ladies were very nice.

Love from Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

We are in the throes of servant troubles again. Matilda was to all appearances alright on Saturday afternoon when we called her to the dining room to listen to the cheering etc. over the wireless on the departure of the King and Queen from Portsmouth. She has not been to work since. The nurse at the dispensary informs me she is laid up with swollen legs again. She may not be able to resume duty for a week or two. We are taking steps to try to get another. We only have the garden boy three days a week and he would not be any use in the house.

On Tuesday afternoon I was overhauled by doctor. My blood pressure was not too bad although I almost always feel my head and heart throbbing a good deal. Further examination showed what I have suspected for some time that the prostate gland was giving trouble. There is nothing to be done about it at present but if and when it gets more troublesome, an operation may be considered necessary. I am not at all sure that I would submit to an operation even then. Uncle Herbert said he would never advise anyone to have it, but then he had complications. However I am not going to worry about it. There is another trouble for which I was operated on before we left Cradock which recurs when I am more or less run down which I hope will yield now that we are not so busy. He advises me to knock off coffee, soup and take very little meat. So that's that.

We are expecting Rev and Mrs Piper on Thursday for one night. They have another grandson in Bloemfontein.

We are sorry to hear that Eric and Freda have had to close their school on account of whooping cough. Kingsley is home and I am wondering if it will prevent Rex from returning to Kingswood for the reopening of his school. On Monday May 1st we sent a cable to Uncle Willie's son, Phil, who was getting married on 6<sup>th</sup>. Hope he got it alright.

Aunt Emmie writes that Tim Webster is going to England on his firm's business in July. I hope European affairs will be more settled by then than they are now.

I forget if I told you last week that I paid a hurried visit to Grahamstown last weekend. I was officially invited to attend the Graduation Ceremony at Rhodes University. I was only in Grahamstown seven hours and got home at 11 pm Saturday. Denis was looking very well. Ruth went down for the weekend last Friday and returned Monday morning.

Mom and I called on Mrs Webster on Tuesday. There were a number of other callers. We were pleased with our visit. This (Wednesday) morning, we had morning tea with our M.P.C. and Mr Metcalf was also a guest. They live in the new Township and have everything very nice. Mr Metcalf attends at his office every day.

Dot writes that she had a very happy birthday and that they are all well. Douglas says they are very busy when he wrote, preparing for the Show. We have not heard yet how it passed off. Kingsley was home on account of whooping cough at Eric's school. We hope to see Rex as he passes through to school next time. Letter from Grace today reports colds in the household. Children are preparing for S.S. anniversary.

Aunt Eliza has sent us a sister of her maid so we are set up for the present, for which much thanks. The servant problem will not be solved so far as I can see until we have one sleeping in. The north wind is blowing strong today – hope it brings up some rain. No frost so far.

No time for more as I want to have a rest before going to two Committee meetings this afternoon.

Lots of love to all from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Wednesday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

As tomorrow we shall be attending the Fish River Fete – Ascension Day – and posts are sure to be put out of gear, I must write today instead. I have just been looking at the sky admiring the beauties of the heavens. At a quarter to six the moon had risen and Venus, Saturn and Mercury were in fairly close proximity. David said “When I consider Thy heavens, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is Man that Thou considers him” etc. Truly we are very insignificant beings, yet He loves and cares for us.

At ten this morning, Mom and I are paying an official visit to the Marlow Training Farm for lads who cannot ever expect to be farming on their own account. They are being trained to become farm managers. I think Uncle James interested himself very much in getting this established. The farm is on a portion of Marlow which we rented many years ago and where we had a farm school and I used to ride backwards and forwards to town every day until I had an accident and fell off my pushbike and ruptured an artery in my leg and had to give up the place and come back to town. Perhaps I may have something to say about the visit next week. Tomorrow we go to Fish River. We are rather expecting Uncle Owen and Aunt Kate today. They have been on a sea trip to Durban and back with Beryl. Their car is still in our garage. Perhaps they will take us to Fish River.

On Monday evening we saw Rex at the station at ten on his way back to school at Grahamstown. His next holiday will not be before the end of July or August. He is looking very well and enjoys the school. He brought us a guinea fowl he had shot on the farm. Ernest’s Jeffrey went back by the same train. Perhaps Rex will be able to spend a weekend with us during the term.

On Tuesday I received a wire from Rhodesia saying my old Croydon School fellow, Willie Gibbs, died the previous night. He used to be in Vryburg many years ago. He was Uncle James best man. His wife is Mrs J.J. Minnaar’s sister in Vryburg. He came to see me once whilst I was at the YMCA.

Last Thursday we had a visit from Rev and Mrs Piper but they only stayed one night. They reported all well at Bloemfontein. We are anxiously waiting news from that quarter.

We have had over an inch of rain since I last wrote. It was very cold and windy but no frost so far. All the leaves are practically off the trees now.

Aunt Emmie wants me to go to Cape Town to consult a specialist. I am not entertaining it at present but if necessary, will consult my doctor again. Do not imagine that I am really ill. I can still get about and do my daily duties.

I had a letter from Sidney Geard this week wanting to know Dossie Dennisen’s address. He is stationed in Maritzburg now and likes the place very much. Ernest’s Christine has been round by sea to Durban and had a nice holiday. She saw Muriel and family.

Later. Uncle Owen and Kate arrived by the morning train and are taking us to Fish River later this afternoon. Mom did not go with me to Marlow this a.m. Nice letters have come to hand this morning from most of you but I cannot answer them. Glad to read that you are all well. I notice that Douglas and Evelyn won prizes at the Vryburg Show, also Kingsley and Eric and Freda’s children.

Much love to you all from  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning (early as usual) and I must get a move on if I want to get my letter off tomorrow. It is the Sunday School picnic today but I am not sure if we shall go. Having no car makes it very awkward for us and I am dead against asking anyone to give us a lift. We often hire a taxi (six pence per mile in the country). I am supposed to put in an appearance at a Rugby match this afternoon between Albany and our local club. There is another on Saturday on behalf of the Hospital funds.

Last Thursday Fish River fete was another success, just over £190 was raised. I had the duty of opening same. We were pleased to see Winnie was getting better from the effects of eating bad mushrooms which happened some months ago.

We noticed in my old paper that Douglas, Evelyn, Kingsley and Eric's children won prizes on the Vryburg Show. We hope they are all better from their attack of whooping cough.

I am glad to say that my bi-focal glass has arrived and I think after a little adjustment, it will be very satisfactory. I hope so.

I had a letter from Sidney Geard recently asking for Dossie Dennison's address. He is stationed at Maritzburg now and often goes to Durban and would like to look her up for old times sake. He hopes he will be stationed there for a long time.

We also heard from Una thanking us for the snap taken at Rockcliff. She says they are wanting to sell their house and take a cheaper one as John has not been able to get his money out of the business he was in, in Port Elizabeth. The firm has since closed down. I have written enquiring what they want for it. Mr and Mrs Florence are visiting them at present as they have been up to Cathcart attending the diamond wedding of one of Mrs Florence's relations.

On Saturday last I was again overhauled by Dr Scholtz. He was too busy when his partner examined me. I do not think I have ever been more closely tested in various ways. He says my heart is somewhat enlarged but the blood pressure is not far out, but I must be careful. He says I should not give up my work as it would not be good for me not to have plenty to interest me. The complaint that I was operated on in Cradock many years ago has been worrying me lately. He has since phoned me wanting to see me again so I am going tomorrow. He says my teeth are in bad condition so I am going to the dentist tomorrow as well.

Denis will be spending his month's holiday with us in July. Ruth will also come to us then. She has definitely decided to leave Cradock at the end of July.

Being Empire Day and a holiday, we shall not get any post before tomorrow. Next week will be the same as that is Union Day.

Wednesday 9.20 pm. Mom and I have been sitting at the wireless listening to the wonderful broadcast from Canada and the King's speech. For the most part it came over wonderfully well. Strange to say our nearest neighbours – Southern Rhodesia – was the least distinct. We have been picturing each of your homes both in S.A. and England listening to the same as we have been. It is so very wonderful.

Well we have had a beautiful day, the weather being perfect. We took a taxi to the Sunday School picnic about 10.30. Mom and I walked to Mr van Rensburg's farmhouse and had morning tea with them and Rev Malerbe and company who happened to be calling. It was very friendly. We had midday meal with the Sunday School and one of the friends motored us back to town about 2.30. I went to watch a football match between Cradock and Albany, Cradock winning by 12 points to eight. As I have to see doctor in the morning and dentist in afternoon, I do not know if I shall be able to add to this before posting.

Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup>. Letters from Grace and Dot and Alan, all very welcome. Rain is reported from both places. Doctor is giving me a series of ten injections and had the first this a.m. Am now off to the dentist.

Lots of love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning, Union Day, and a public holiday. As soon as the sun is up, I shall hoist the Union Jack and Union flags at the front gate. I noticed in the Midland News last week the town was ticked off for having the Union Jack flying on Empire day – mine were up. We have not decide what to do or where to go today but if it turns out a nice day, we may hire a taxi and spend part of the day at egg rock and have the remains of a fowl for our dinner in the open. I do miss not having a car on such occasions and I am too independent to ask anyone to give us a lift. Last week we hired a taxi to go to the Sunday School picnic. When we had our own car, we never went for a picnic without taking someone with us who had not a car. We are having delightful weather now, cold mornings and evenings and only once or twice has it actually frozen. The maximum temperature ranges between sixty and seventy each day. Windy weather we may expect about July and August. We enjoy having a fire in the dining room every night and a hot-water bottle when we go to bed.

After dinner I usually sit out at the back under the vine trellis in a deckchair like Uncle Joe's which Joe made us years ago and read the Eastern Province Herald which is published in Port Elizabeth about six in the morning and is delivered here about ten. Of course it comes up by motor lorry – 180 miles. It is so interesting watching the birds having their bath in the little fountain I fixed up for them. I do not generally have a nap now as the days are so short. Most of the leaves are off the trees now and we must expect severe frosts as the moon grows. In three weeks time we shall be passing the shortest day. There is an old saying overseas that "as the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen", and I think this is quite true. I notice our yellow jasmine is coming into flower on the front arch and will soon look very pretty. Some of the roses we planted last year are flowering.

Mr Seller, who was park curator here for years, writes that he is thinking of coming back to live here again about August. We have suggested that he runs our garden for his own benefit so long as we can have what we want for our own use out of it.

Matilda called last week saying she was going to Herschel as her Aunt had died and she wanted to see about her late mother's property. She has certainly been ill and we do not expect she will return to us. The new maid is doing fairly well. It is no good to expect perfection in any of them.

On Saturday as I was going to my barber's, I was accosted by a "Mr Butler, who was in Port Elizabeth Hospital for an eye operation". It was Nurse Wainwright, who was in charge of that ward. I did not recognise her. She is now on the staff of nurses inspecting schools. She had tea and supper with us on Sunday and we went to church with Mom. She is wanting to get back into hospital nursing and may apply for the position of matron here. Her Aunt is a great friend of Douglas' neighbours, the Collins. I think she would be an acquisition if she gets the post.

We are sorry to hear that Eric and Freda are having such a time with whooping cough. The school has been closed for some time but was expected to open again this week. One of their children has been bad – temperature 104. They want to get to Durban for a change, so have written to Ted's parents at Doonside to see if they have accommodation available. Kingsley has been home for some time with it.

Aunt Eliza is looking forward to Gladys coming up for the school holidays as the two boys have been invited to Florrie's for the holidays. It will be very nice if this materialises.

Aunt Agnes' Jeaney has another baby, on the farm this time.

I got so far before breakfast and it is now Thursday before breakfast. The maid does not come before about 7.30. Mom has had her early cup of tea.

Yesterday morning we watched Cradock play Port Elizabeth at tennis and in the afternoon we watched a friendly game of bowls. I am hoping Mom will take up the game and I would do so as well. It was a perfect day – no wind or dust, just lovely to be out all day. I see I have come to the end of my sheet so love from Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

We have had ice on my birds bath a couple of times this week. I have not taken the temperatures yet this (Wednesday) morning but I can feel it is pretty cold. I have to welcome a Farmers Congress at nine this a.m. and this afternoon witness a Rugby match against Somerset East so must get a move on.

I am glad to say that the dentist is satisfied with my teeth. He could not find anything septic the matter but I must go to him every few months for examination. I am to use the small plate of three for the bottom set at mealtime only. On Monday I had my 4<sup>th</sup> injection and tomorrow I am to have two for different purposes. I am certainly better than a fortnight or so ago. I hope the improvement will be maintained.

Last Thursday our Stationmaster's only surviving son was buried. He had gone down to Port Elizabeth the previous Saturday to play in a match but as he was not feeling well, he did not play. He was sent to an isolation hospital as it was thought he was suffering from measles but double pneumonia set in and he died on Tuesday morning. He was a great favourite here. I knew the Stationmaster when he was stationed at Polokwane many years ago.

The new maid is doing very well. Her former mistress speaks very well of her – she worked for her for some years and only left on account of her (the maid's) baby dying. So I hope we shall be able to keep her for a long time.

Both Rex and Arthur have birthdays this month. I have asked Rex if he can come to us for a weekend. I hardly expect he can as the school works on Saturdays. Denis has a month's holiday in July and is coming here. Ruth will also stay with us.

Aunt Eliza is looking forward to Gladys spending the June holidays with her but it depends how the boys keep. They have not been too well lately.

Thursday morning. Grace reports her children being better but feeling the cold ride into school in the mornings. Miss Hicks is a great help to her in many ways. Joe reports that Bessie Price is sometimes better and other times not so well for the change. It is nice for her to be with Blodwen. We have asked her if she is returning to Cape Town via Port Elizabeth to break her journey here. Joe says they are not sending Roy to school until next year.

Rex and Arthur will be 16 and 19 respectively this month. We have asked Rex to see if he can spend a weekend with us but Ruth says Kingswood have school on Saturdays. No doubt we shall hear shortly. Lynne is going to East London to play hockey match with her school team during the holidays. It will be nice if they come this way but I expect it will be nearer via Bloemfontein and Queenstown. We have not been at home here when any of them have been here except Douglas.

My functions yesterday passed off alright, I think. I told the farmers some home truths.

Next Tuesday it will be two years since Uncle Herbert passed away and on 17<sup>th</sup> will be the sixteenth anniversary of Uncle James' death.

Evelyn writes that her flower garden affords her lots of pleasure and no doubt plenty of work. They are always very busy there.

The rage just now amongst the ladies is the making of what is called coalie flower. It is a mixture of lumps of coal, Prussian blue, common salt, liquid ammonia and water. The "flower" somewhat resembles coral and develops very quickly. Mom and Ruth have made some and they look very pretty. Mom wants to exhibit hers on Saturday when the YWCA are holding a bazaar in the Town Hall, which incidentally I have to open.

Thursday afternoon. I have had my inoculations, one in the arm and the other in lower regions and do not feel too comfortable at present but no doubt will be better soon. The dose has to be repeated next Thursday. Mom is going to her W.C.T.U. and will post this on route. A postcard from Dot says she was just off to Pietersburg with some ladies and so could not write then. No news from Bloemfontein yet.

Lots of love to all from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I suppose the sun rises about the same time with all of you, except Cape Town, about the same time as here, viz, about 7.30. It is quite dark when I start but if I did not commence early, I should not write much every week. Mom has made me a nice warm rug to put over my knees when I am sitting at my desk and so with my dressing gown on, I am quite warm.

The important news of the week is the safe arrival of our 15<sup>th</sup> grandchild in the person of Trevor, born at 10.45 last Saturday morning (10<sup>th</sup>) at Bloemfontein. We have since had a letter from Blodwen saying that everything is alright. Baby weighed 9½ pounds. Bessie, Blodwen's sister, is managing the house and looking after the other children very nicely. We are glad to hear that she is putting on weight since her arrival from Cape Town. We have invited her to break her journey here on her way back if she goes via Port Elizabeth.

You will be sorry to hear that Uncle Walter has had a sort of stroke lately and is not able to speak properly. He is not confined to bed but doctor has been out to see him once. Nurse Edith, Uncle Jack's sister, is also laid up in the Eastern Transvaal.

On Saturday evening, Mom, Ruth and I went to see the play given on behalf of the motor ambulance fund I am trying to raise, entitled "A little Bit of Fluff". It was very laughable and very well produced by the Somerset East performers. We three have also been to see the film Pygmalion which is worth seeing.

Dot writes that they are hoping to go to the Game Reserve with Leslie and Gwen next month. They hope that Gilbert and Co may also go with them and so make up a Vryburg party. I hope to go there again some day.

We are having a cosy corner made in the dining room where the wireless stands. It will do for an emergency bed if necessary. I have also altered my bed on the back stoep by putting it across the stoep instead of long-ways. This saves a lot of room. We sit out there a good deal now in the mornings as it is so nice and warm there.

The news over the wireless this morning is not too cheering. It looks as though England may be involved with Japan. I sincerely hope not.

I have been spending some time lately in looking over old correspondence from my brothers and others but I don't suppose anybody will ever have the time to read them again.

Trixie and her baby are staying with Reg and Dot at present, a nice change for all of them. No letter from Grace so far this week. It will be Arthur's birthday next week. They are very busy there but always write very brightly. Rex writes that he will not be able to spend a weekend here as they have school on Saturdays. We shall try to see him as he passes home on his holiday.

7.36. The maid has just arrived and the sun is just rising.

I am glad to say I am feeling much better, evidently the injections are doing me good. I am to have two more today.

I hope you will like the photographs enclosed, I have had a few larger ones also taken. Later. After dinner. Letter from Grace supports having to get better servants and all well. I have had my injections this morning and it makes me feel nasty but they are doing me good.

Lots of love to all,

Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1939

My dear All,

Wednesday morning. It is the shortest day of the year and the birds' bath is a block of ice. Although this is considered as the middle of winter, we have not had very much cold weather. It will be some weeks before we can notice any lengthening of the daylight.

Mary has left her diphtheria patient, a little girl of six, who is now getting better. She (Mary) has been staying with us for some days but has now taken a room nearly opposite Aunt Eliza and moves in there tomorrow. She has been on night duty for a few days nursing Mrs Willie Rayner who died yesterday about two. Mrs Rayner's husband was best man at our wedding. He died some years ago. I shall be attending the funeral this afternoon.

We have made a change in our dining room. The table is now across the room instead of lengthwise. It looks very well and we are able to have the settee lengthwise in front of the fire with its back up against the side of the table. We are also putting a cosy corner where the wireless stands. This will stand on a small bracket alongside of the fireplace.

We are still troubled with a rat or two about the house but have not been able to catch them. They are very cute little beggars. The Council is hiring out traps to householders at 1/- per fortnight.

Denis arrives this morning on a month's holiday. He is spending a week at the hotel with his mother and then comes to us for the rest of his holiday. Ruth also comes to us from the first of July.

Gladys Webster is due next Tuesday evening from Cape Town and will stay with Aunt Eliza. Her two boys are going, I understand, to stay with Florrie Biggs at Graaff Reinet. We shall hope to see as much of her as possible.

The owner of the property of the bookshop is putting up a new frontage which will be great improvement to that corner.

We are glad to hear such good accounts of Blodwen and her baby. Both are doing wonderfully well. Neither Joe or Blodwen have remarked on what the other children think of their new brother.

It is Arthur's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday tomorrow. He writes very encouragingly of the work on the farm. He says Lynne is playing a hockey match at Port Elizabeth – I thought it was at East London – so I hope we shall see something of her here.

I have had a very busy week so far - service on Sunday morning, seven committee meetings on Monday, four yesterday, morning tea and a funeral this afternoon today and more meetings each day this week, next week 20. Dutch Sunday school teachers are holding a conference here. I have been asked to show them some hospitality. Shall probably take them on a motor trip to Lake Arthur and regale them with oranges etc. Afternoon tea would be too awkward out in the country.

Our old doctor, Dr J M Fehrsen, is on a visit to Cradock. He is 88 years old and as fresh as a new button. He was Paul Kruger's doctor during the Boer War and is a most interesting man. He brought some of our children into the world. He has promised to come and see us.

Thursday morning. Letters from Grace, Dot and Joe and Blodwen, all very interesting and good news. Baby Trevor seems to be making good progress and Blodwen too. All of you seem to be pleased with the photo of Mom especially. Grace's boys cannot understand my "pirates" hat. Denis arrived and looks very well. Roy has learned to ride a bike, much to his enjoyment.

Mom's coalie flowers are greatly admired. Dot is going to have a try at them. I am still having inoculations and they are doing me good, I think, at any rate I am continuing with them. I have to have two today. I have had a nasty cold in my head – sitting too near the fire I think. Our old doctor (87) dropped in just before supper last evening and kept us all amused and interested in some of his experiences. Am glad Ruth and Denis were here to listen to him.

We may go to Tarka for service on Sunday morning with Rev Weavers and have dinner

with old Mrs Trollip who is about 90. She came in specially to town recently to watch a tennis match against Port Elizabeth. She said she wanted to see some really good tennis! We shall be back after dinner if we do go. I have another full day in front of the Council meeting Tuesday.

Lots of love

Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

The event of the week has been the safe arrival of another son to Grace and Ted on Thursday evening. We got the news on Friday morning. This makes sixteen grandchildren, twelve grandsons and four granddaughters, all doing well. Perhaps we shall hear today (Wednesday) how the new arrivals in Kroonstad and Bloemfontein are progressing. We hope that both homes will be the happier for the additions. We shall look forward to making their acquaintance as soon as possible. In this connection I have been asked to attend a conference at Pretoria on the question of Moral Rearmament which opens on 1<sup>st</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup>. So far I have not been able to see the way open. I was offered a lift by car but I have a number of duties to perform here at present. However we will see later on.

On Thursday evening I have to extend a welcome to about 250 Dutch Sunday school teachers and the same evening there is a public meeting of Ratepayers regarding improvements to the sports ground. Saturday afternoon we are giving the Sunday School teachers a picnic at the Warm baths. This evening we are giving a dinner to Senator Fourie and so it goes on. General Smuts is also coming here in September. The Governor General has not yet intimated when he is coming. At our Council meeting it was decided to invite the Eastern Province Commercial Union to hold their next meeting here.

As my glasses were giving me trouble last week and I could not get them properly adjusted here and they were making a serious indentation on my nose, I decided to go down to Port Elizabeth and consult the man who supplied them. He fixed them up in a few minutes. I went to Friends meeting on Sunday morning and evening and met quite a number of friends. I went for a walk to the docks and just missed seeing Howard Hemming who, with his daughter, was going to Beira for the sea trip. Friend Pollard, who visited me when in hospital recognised me and we spent some time at Humewood. The evening was spent with Mr and Mrs Addis Smith (whom I married at Cape Town years ago). I did not see their little son. Sunday I went for another walk to the docks and met by accident the people who lived just opposite here and were transferred to Uitenhage last December. They were pleased to see me. As I left them, Kingsley Gretton and his wife accosted me. They are now living at North End. His mother is living with them. I went to dinner with Mr and Mrs Blunsom (some relation of Aunt Hetty) and had supper with Mr and Mrs Merrifield. So you see, I saw quite a number of friends. Mr Bateman saw me off on Sunday night and I was home again fit for work on Monday morning. Mary stayed with Mom whilst I was away.

Gladys Webster was due to arrive at Aunt Eliza's last evening (Tuesday) but have not been up to see her yet. I am writing this before breakfast Wednesday.

We have got our cosy corner fixed up and it looks very nice and is quite comfortable. I have in consequence shifted the wireless set to the other side of the fireplace, just by my desk. It is very convenient there.

Ruth and Denis will be staying with us from the end of this week. He is going out to Uncle Norman's for a visit and has a number of invitations to parties etc. He is looking very well. I got so far before breakfast.

Thursday morning, early. Very satisfactory letters from Grace came yesterday. Baby has received a very hearty welcome from all. The children are very pleased and say he is like Harold. I saw Gladys yesterday morning. Her boys are not going to Graaff Reinet. Last night's dinner to Senator Fourie passed off nicely and I hope the other functions of today will be equally successful.

We are troubled with rats in the house and have not been able to catch them. They are very daring. We have tried traps, poison etc. You would have laughed last night seeing Mom and I trying to swat one in the dining room. Mom had the mop and I a broom but we were not quick enough. Overseas news is far from cheering. Still I do not think we are going to have war. Trixie is still with Reg and Dot and is putting on weight, which is good news.

Thursday afternoon. I am sorry I have not time to add except to report all well. Letter from Douglas this a.m. says Lynne will not be passing here on way to East London for hockey match.

Love to all,  
Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

Last week I told you of my unexpected trip to Port Elizabeth. This week I can report another unexpected trip to East London this weekend. The Council decided that the Town Clerk, Location Superintendent and I should go and inspect the beer hall at East London before embarking on a similar venture here. The plan was hurriedly arranged and we left in the Town Clerk's car about 8.30 Sunday morning. Mrs van Heerden and three of her young children accompanied her. These they left at a farm of her relations on the way, to be called for on the return trip. We arrive at 2.30. Knowing that Lynne was also there, I stayed at the same hotel. She was out when I arrive so I asked the staff not to tell her I was there but that a gentleman wanted to see her. The lady in charge entered into the plan and when she did come in, she told her she wanted to show her room 57. I was resting when I heard a knock at the door. Lynne was greatly surprised to see me there. She and her companions were full of beans. They had been taken up the river where we went before. I sat at her table and enjoyed her company. All the hockey players had been specially invited to attend service at Rev Mearer's church so I went with her. Next morning we got busy with the object of our business and had a very interesting and useful interview with the man in charge of the work. We just managed to squeeze in time to pay a flying visit to Rockcliff Cottages as Mr van Heerden is very anxious to take his family there for the Xmas holidays. Mr Lutge, we saw, and he is booked up from December 15<sup>th</sup> to January 15<sup>th</sup> but has given him the second refusal in case anyone drops out. We walked down to the lagoon and everything was just as when we were there in January. Children were bathing – although it is winter. Mr van Heerden says the place is far superior to Jeffreys Bay where they have been going for some years.

We left on our return trip about 3.30. I called to see John Shingler but he was out. I did see Mr Stokes, Gladys' friend, for a few minutes. After passing King Williams Town, we had some trouble with the car lights so we stopped for an hour or more at Alice. Whilst they were being fixed up, I called to see Norma Rickett. This is the first time I had met her husband. They were just having supper so Mr Wilkins and I had a few mouthfuls with them, when Mr van Heerden called, so we were off again and reached home after picking up the children at the farm and also giving a tramp a lift for a few miles standing on the running board as we were seven inside the car. It was past twelve before I got to bed. Mom and Ruth had already retired.

Thursday morning early. Denis has been at Katkop since last Friday. He went back with one of the Norman's boys after attending a dance. He is coming back on Friday to attend another dance. He sent us in a couple of guinea fowls which he had shot. These I hung on the clothes line out of the way of cats and dogs for the night. Next morning I found one on the ground unmauled and Mom found the other buried under some leaves – evidently by a dog – also unmauled. We have been troubled with rats about the house for some time and have succeeded in catching a few in a municipal trap. They are very cute beggars. I suppose we shall have to install a cat but we have avoided having any domestic pets as we are sometimes away from home.

I have received an invitation to attend Mrs Farren's son's wedding in Pretoria on 23<sup>rd</sup> but of course shall not attend. Our picnic party on Saturday afternoon went off very nicely. Over 200 there. Thanks for all letters received during the week. Both babies seem to be behaving themselves in a model way and have been heartily received by their respective brothers and sisters. Trixie has gone back to Johannesburg, her baby having put on weight after their visit to Dot and Reg. Blodwen's sister, Bessie, will be coming to us in August on her way to Port Elizabeth. Dot has to have her eyes seen to in Johannesburg. I hope to have my last injection this morning. I am certainly feeling much better. It is Gladys' birthday today so must go and see her. She returns to Cape Town next Tuesday. Merle's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday tomorrow. Ruth is giving an address at Mortimer today. Nessie is coming in to fetch her and will have dinner with us. Had a little rain last night.

Lots of love to everyone, from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is Wednesday afternoon and I must make a start. Yesterday the Town Clerk, Mr Stock, and I motored to Colesberg and back to inspect the beer hall the Council is running there. We did the distance of 125 miles in four hours and we were back home by 6.30 - total mileage 260. We gained a lot of useful information. Whilst there, we met the Mayor, Mr de Jager, who knows Douglas and Mike Meyers. The national roads – in course of construction – are a treat to travel over. We did not see anyone we know on the way through Middelburg. It must be between 40 to 50 years since I was last in Colesberg and the place does not seem to have grown or improved at all. I can say I am very thankful that I do not have to live there. The streets are narrow and the town lies between two rows of koppies. It is like a good many other up country towns that are going down hill. I used the lunch suitcase the children gave me at East London on my birthday for the first time. It was very useful and answered splendidly. Again thanks for the present.

I was very sorry to have missed seeing the Shinglers at East London. I have had a nice letter from him since my return. He sends his congratulations to Grace and Blodwen on their new arrivals.

I suppose you have all noticed that the days are lengthening quite a good deal. It has not made much difference to the time our maid arrives in the morning. Sometimes she turns up at a quarter to eight. I still rise at six.

For some time we have been bothered with rats in the house. So far I have accounted for seven but they run all over the place. The last two I caught in a trap managed to escape and I have not caught any since. They are very cute little beggars. Can any of you suggest any means of dealing with the pest?

I had a long letter from Mr Heekes, my old foreman in the printing office at Vryburg. He is now in Rhodesia, has lost his wife and his children are married. He is still in the printing trade and works for the Argus Co. It is nice to keep in touch with old friends.

Roy is to go to school after this quarter. He will be quite important. Blodwen reports baby is getting on very nicely. Bessie may be coming here in August.

Grace, too, is getting on nicely and baby doing well – one of the boys has a nasty cold but otherwise all seem OK.

Whilst I think of it, I sent round some snaps some weeks ago. Joe says he had them but feels sure he has sent them on. Please have a look for them any of you.

I have recently had two enquiries if I will sell this house. If I get my price of £1500, we will let it go.

On Sunday afternoon we are having the usual Delville Wood service at the Cenotaph. I expect there will be a crowd there.

Gladys goes back to Cape Town on Thursday morning. We have not seen very much of her I am sorry to say. I am seeing her off in the morning.

On Tuesday evening we had Mr and Mrs Maurice Webb of Durban here for the evening. Ten assembled to hear a report of the Friends' yearly meeting. It was quite interesting. Did not get to bed before 11.

Thursday morning. Have just seen Gladys off to Cape Town. Heavy frost on the ground. Ruth is going to Mortimer this afternoon to give her lecture on "Writers". Will be back later.

Aunt Jessie came to town on Tuesday and is staying with us. She is far from well - rheumatism in her feet and hands. She can hardly walk. She is very bright. Mary comes to see her twice a day and helps. We caught two rats by the drawing room door last night.

It is now afternoon and must get post off. A nicely typed letter from Lynne came this morning.

Lots of love to all,  
Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

The following list of birthdays of our sixteen grandchildren may be of interest to you all.

Arthur Charles Butler	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 1920
Denis Ryall Butler	21 <sup>st</sup> March 1921
Lynne Eva Butler	4 <sup>th</sup> December 1921
Rex Douglas Butler	10 <sup>th</sup> June 1923
David Kaighin Irons	21 <sup>st</sup> March 1926
Harold Stanley Irons	1 <sup>st</sup> September 1927
Kingsley Evelyn Butler	12 <sup>th</sup> October 1928
Pamela Marion Irons	17 <sup>th</sup> February 1929
Norman Stuart Hudson	6 <sup>th</sup> January 1931
Jean Dorothy Irons	25 <sup>th</sup> January 1931
Cicely Roy Butler	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 1931
Allan Raymond Hudson	19 <sup>th</sup> May 1933
Roy Charles Butler	30 <sup>th</sup> July 1938
Merle Alice Butler	7 <sup>th</sup> July 1934
Trevor Price Butler	10 <sup>th</sup> June s1939
Charles Frank Irons	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 1939

On Thursday last week, I went with Ruth to a Group meeting at Dr van Rensburg's house who gave a very interesting account of the house party at Pretoria to which I had been invited but could not attend.

Sunday was Delville Wood day and it had been arranged to hold same at the Cenotaph this year but unfortunately rain came on and it was bitterly cold so we had it in the Town Hall. There was a larger attendance than ever, so I am told. Monday morning I attended the opening of the Boys' High School and with others, extended a welcome to the new Headmaster. We are giving a public reception to him next Friday in the Town Hall. It is quite evident that he will be a great improvement on the last man. I only had six Committee meetings to attend the same day. Unfortunately there has been a few cases of typhus fever in the location recently and have had to close the schools there for a fortnight. Hope there will not be any further cases.

Have had all our vines pruned this week and hope for better results than last season although we had plenty. We have experienced strange weather conditions. Very cold and damp with some showers. Farmers are looking to an early Spring and are busy ploughing.

Aunt Jessie was with us for a week. Doctor says she is suffering from gout. She went back on Monday – Mary has gone with her for a few days. Cradock is now on the air map so if any of you want to drop in and see us, it is only to tell the pilot where to stop.

I hear from Mrs Bert Metcalf that her brother Bevan is still in Valkenberg Asylum. He has been there for about thirty five years. He had been bedridden for a couple of years. I used to visit him when we were at Observatory.

Denis returns to University on Monday and Ruth is paying some visits to friends before returning. Denis has been to lots of dances and has played golf a couple of times with his mother. He spent a week at Katkop. Baby Trevor is to be christened next week after which we expect Blodwen's sister, who has been with her for a few months, will come to us on her way to visit her sister, Mrs Merrifield, at Port Elizabeth. She seems to have benefitted by her stay in Bloemfontein.

Later. Thursday afternoon. I have been to my doctor who says that no further inoculations are necessary and he considers my health good enough for a few more years' service. No letters from Dot this week so presume they are at the Game Reserve. Grace reports baby is getting on nicely. Blodwen's is also A.1. Mom is having the W.C.T.U. here this afternoon to tea. Ruth is helping. The weather today is perfect. I must not add more now so with love to all as though names from Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is not often that I leave the commencing of my letter to the actual day of posting but so it is this week and I must hurry along with it as I want to get it done in time. Let me first of all wish Ted many happy returns of yesterday. We were glad to hear that at last the telephone had been laid on so to commemorate the event, we put a trunk call through a few evenings ago to congratulate them and to enquire how they all were. Grace had gone to bed but got up just to have a word with us. Am glad to say all was well and baby flourishing and giving no excessive trouble. Glad he has found such a warm welcome. Dot has written two letters since their return from the Game Reserve. They had a good time but only saw one lion. They do not refer to the wet weather we experienced so presume they had it fine for the 800 mile journey. They had two cars as they took the two boys with them and Leslie, Gwen and their family joined them. They found the house etc alright on their return. Gwen has, unfortunately, to undergo an operation in Johannesburg before returning to their home in Vryburg so has left her three children with Dot for a week or so. They are going to school with Dot's boys.

Joe and Blodwen are celebrating their children's birthdays this weekend and baby is also to be christened. So there is excitement in their home. Bessie will be coming to us pretty soon and we hope the change will do her good. Denis left on Monday morning and has settled down in new rooms at the University. He has passed in all his subjects at the exams held just before the holidays. This is an unusual for students in their first year at college.

Douglas writes that they are very busy as usual. He has secured some drilling work for the Government which keeps his machines busy. There is also plenty to do on the farm. Rex will be passing here next Saturday morning on his way home for a month's holiday. He was in quarantine for a week or so as they thought he had mumps. Ruth is going to visit Nessie and other friends at Tarka next Tuesday and looks to be away about a week. After that she will be visiting at Grass Ridge for another week or so after which she goes to Somerset East and then back to Grahamstown where she will stay with a friend who wants her to share her house at Stonehills. She is librarian at Rhodes University. She has been doing a lot of writing here and has sent some away to the Outspan and other papers. She is very successful with her pen.

Locally we are much the same as usual. The afternoon tea with the W.C.T.U. here last Thursday went off very well. I did not stay as I was asked to attend the funeral of the ashes of a former editor of the opposition paper that was so bitter against Uncle James in former days. The ashes were sent from Scotland and were contained in a casket about ten inches long by about six by six. I attended a sale on Saturday and bought a bedroom suite for the spare room for £6:5:0, quite a nice one. Our Council meeting on Tuesday was about the shortages on record, only about an hour and a half. On my return, I found Mr Bateman (formerly of Bloemfontein) a friend, was here. He was off to Louisvale the next morning. Mary returned from Fish River yesterday and reports Aunt Jessie much better and able to walk without a stick.

Tomorrow we are giving an official welcome to the new Principal of the Boys' school. We expect a few hundred will be present. Hope it passes off satisfactorily. We have only issued a general invitation through the Midland News so it is difficult to know how many to provide for. Mr Curson has been appointed to the Secretaryship of the Hospital as a part time job. This will mean changes for Ernest as he will not be able to do as much as he does at present. The appointment does not begin until September 1<sup>st</sup>. Mary has made me a nice pair of mittens which are very comfortable these cold mornings. I am wearing them for the first time today. We have so far accounted for nine rats and hope that is the last of the trouble.

Billy Rickett and his fiancé, whom we met at Rockcliff spent an afternoon with us on Tuesday. They are on holiday at Hales Owen and seem very happy. Grace's phone number is 60. Later. Nice letter from Grace to hand reports all well there. Mom and Ruth are out calling this afternoon.

Lots of love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1938

My dear All,

It will be 25 years ago tomorrow that the Great War started. Germany is making a great day of it by having reviews etc. I sincerely hope that affairs in Europe will settle down and so avoid a repetition of what happened then. We may be very thankful that Mr Chamberlain is doing his best to maintain peace in the world.

Ruth left on Tuesday afternoon for a week's visit to one of her old school chums – Mrs Lanham – who was Edith Rayner's daughter. Then to Grass Ridge. On Monday afternoon we had a farewell tea for her – all allies, about twenty of them. The drawing room was comfortably filled and they seemed to enjoy themselves. I made an appearance at the end of the function. Then on Friday of last week we had the social in the Town Hall for the new headmaster and his wife. Over two hundred were present and I am glad to say it passed off very nicely. Some have expressed the wish that we had more of such functions. A nice musical programme was arranged by one of the music teachers and of course there were three speeches. Mrs Liebenberg is the daughter of the late Rev P.J.J. Meering of Rondebosch. I knew him very well. He was a great peace man and sometimes came and addressed the boys at Louis Botha House. She is a fine woman and I think the pair of them will do well.

Aunt Agnes and Enid had dinner with us one day. Uncle Jack is going to Synod next week so it will not be necessary for me to go unless some other delegate drops out. They report that Winnie is getting better but the doctor reckons it will be at least a year before she is properly well. She cannot express herself properly yet but they all know what she wants to say. Winnie says Edith (nurse) is coming down later on as she has been very ill. I expect we shall see her.

Ernest's Dorothy is down from Upington. They are being transferred to Cape Town later on. They have had Christine down with flu for some days. She is getting better but not at work yet.

We have been having some very cold weather lately. Some days we have the dining room fire going nearly all day. We had a little rain one night but the water was frozen in the rain gauge. The birds' bath is frequently a block of ice. Last year we had a pair of birds – mossies I think – nesting in the reed mat at the kitchen door. After bringing up their young, they left but this week we notice birds are building in the same place again. I suppose it is the same pair again. The poinsettia on our back stoep has been in flower for some time. They do not seem to catch the frost there. Our cosy corner is very comfortable and is appreciated. We have put up new curtains in both spare rooms and they look very nice.

Rex passes through on Friday night. I intend going over to see him. He is spending Saturday and Sunday in Kimberley with Lynne.

Douglas reports being very busy as usual. He estimates that he travels on an average one thousand miles a month. Eric and Freda's twins are ten today. Am glad to hear they all are in better in health there

Dot says they met Teddie Browne recently. He and his wife are living in Pietersburg. Mrs Dennison Browne is with them at present. Mrs Hudson Senior has gone back to East London.

Joe and Blodwen write that Roy's birthday party went off nicely. Baby was christened last Sunday and behaved himself fairly well. Bessie will be coming to us next Tuesday morning. She is in better health from having been in Bloemfontein for some weeks. Joe was off work for a few days. He must feel it very cold at work so early in the mornings.

Ted writes that Grace and Pam are down with the flu but are getting better. He has not been well either. He has had five men sick from the office but has managed to get leave so as to help at home. Hope to hear better news soon. They have had to get extra assistance to help in the home. Miss Hicks is still helping but has to be away for a couple of days.

We are keeping well I am glad to say.

Lots of love, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning and just 18 years ago that dear Harold was called away. No doubt some of you will remember the time. Ruth is still away at Mortimer and is going on to Somerset East. She has been down to Grahamstown for a day and has decided to try the experiment of staying at Stone Hills for a month to see how she likes it there. We often have a chat over the phone.

Bessie arrived from Bloemfontein on Tuesday morning. The train was an hour late. We have been greatly interested in hearing of the doings at Exton Road. She is loud in her praise of the "darling" baby. She has brought snaps of the child and they are very good. No doubt they will be sent round.

Later. Bessie has had a letter from Blodwen this morning saying Joe was nearly killed yesterday at the works. From what we can gather, it seems that the hammer man let the hammer slip and it struck Joe on the forehead – in between his eyes. He is off work of course. We hope for better news in the morning. We have also been anxious about Grace and Pam, both of them have been down with flu. Grace was so ill that Ted had to have the doctor out and he was quite overdone with work at the office. At one time there were five members of the staff away. Fortunately he has been able to get some leave and so is able to help at home.

Owing to last Monday being a public holiday, we have not had any letter today, Wednesday. No doubt we shall get some tomorrow.

Uncle Jack is laid up with flu and so will not be able to go to Port Elizabeth Synod on Saturday. Uncle Gervase is going too so will take me. Bessie will be here with Mom. I expect to be home on Tuesday.

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>. No letters from either Joe or Grace today so I take it that no news is good news and we hope for the best. I hope I shall hear before I leave on Saturday morning.

We are glad to hear that the Kroonstad School Board is going to introduce motor buses for the school children soon so it will be easier for them.

We saw Rex on Friday last as he passed through to Vryburg. He was very well and looking forward to seeing Lynne on Saturday and Sunday.

You must excuse mistakes as I have to leave for a special Council meeting in a few minutes and we have Aunt Jessie, Uncle Gervase and Enid and Bessie all here talking at the same time. I am sorry to hear from them that Willie Saunders is suffering from heart attacks and can't come to town. Dorothy writes very brightly and says that Gwen has had a bad time in Johannesburg Hospital.

I must really stop, very dear love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

The news has not been too cheerful this week. Mom's cold did not improve whilst I was away at Port Elizabeth but I am glad to say it is on the mend now. Ruth was away at Somerset East but Bessie was here and looked after Mom very nicely. I left by car on Saturday morning with Uncle Gervase, Pam and Mr Kelly. Uncle was not too well, his back was troubling him. Mr Kelly did most of the driving. Denis was playing in Rhodes first team at Grahamstown that afternoon and unfortunately he got hurt in his head again and had to be taken to hospital in the ambulance. It was broadcast and Mr Willie Brown heard it and of course told Ruth. She left as soon as she could by train for Grahamstown and I am glad to say he was not detained long. He seems to be alright now and has decided not to play again this season. Ruth wired the news to me and we got into telephone communication. We arranged that Uncle Gervase would pick her up at Grahamstown on Tuesday as he returned and I came back by train on Monday night. Am glad to say Denis has not lost any studies and seems quite fit again. His side won the match. It rained all day Tuesday but they got back quite safely. Uncle Gervase slept in town and it was arranged that he should take Ruth out the next morning to Grass Ridge for a few days as she had never been to the old home. However he forgot to call so she is going out with Aunt Kate who is coming in on Saturday. So we have Ruth and Bessie here and both are very helpful. They have been playing halma, been to bio together and if the weather is fine, I hope we shall all be able to have a motor spin.

We are glad to say that Joe's accident was nothing like as serious as we thought from the description Blodwen gave in her letter to Bessie. It might have been most serious and we can all be thankful that he was mercifully spared. Grace is not getting up her strength as quickly as all would like but with patience added to patience, I hope all will come right. It is fortunate that Ted was able to get some of the leave due to him so as to be able to help at home. Her children have done very well in their last quarter's exams, hearty congratulations. Jean is getting on well with her music. Roy is thrilled with his school and is proud at being allowed to go and return alone.

Dot reports that she and the children have been up in an aeroplane, all were thrilled at the experience. Gwen Hudson was expected back from Johannesburg Hospital this week. She has to go again and has had a gruelling time. Her children have been going to school with Dot's boys.

You will be sorry to hear that Willie Saunders (senior) has had a number of heart attacks recently and fainted one day. Doctor has ordered him to the coast but he has not been able to be moved. He has been a sufferer for some time. We hope for better news of him but shall not be surprised. Later, after dinner. We had 160 points of rain on Monday night to Wednesday morning and the river has been down in flood. We are evidently in for an early Spring although the nights are still cold. Mom is certainly better and after she has had her nap, I hope she will get up and sit by the fire in the dining room. Received interesting little letters from Eric's twins and Kingsley today. They are preparing for a concert at the end of the term.

Bessie will be going to Port Elizabeth next Tuesday, we shall miss her and Ruth who goes to Fish River on Saturday and looks to return to Grahamstown by the end of next week.

Dot refers to having met Ted Browne and his mother in Potgietersrus quite unexpectedly. We are hoping to see Mrs Browne when she passes here on her way to Port Elizabeth.

Mary is nursing three cases of scarlet fever at Rocklands Girls School. I am glad to say they are all getting better. We did not close the boarding department as was at first thought to be desirable.

Aunt Eliza is about the same as usual. Always busy about the house. Aunt Jessie is much better of her gout. Was in town last week and is able to walk much better. Uncle Jack has been laid up but was in town yesterday and says they have had splendid rains. Our tanks are not full but these rains have been very acceptable. We do not get rain as a rule in the winter.

I must close now, with love to you all and hoping to hear brighter news next mail. Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday August 24<sup>th</sup> 1939

My dear All,

First let me say that Mom is better and about again, for which I am thankful. She does not go out in the evenings and we have fire more or less all day in the dining room.

Bessie left us on Tuesday morning after spending a fortnight with us. We enjoyed her company and hope the change has done her good. She took a class in the Sunday School last Sunday morning. We took her for a motor spin one afternoon and to the bio once or twice. She has been interested in reading a book of Ruth's and has been very helpful in the house.

Ruth went to Grass Ridge with Uncle Dudley and Kate on Saturday last and is due back on Friday morning and leaves for Grahamstown the following day. She has never been to Grass Ridge before. I think she has been able to see most of the relations in that neighbourhood.

We have had a very wet week, in fact quite unusual for this time of the year. August is generally our windiest month and for years past no rain has fallen during the month. The rain has been general, some districts stating that there is no record of such falls. I am trying to get fuller details of past records of Cradock which will be very interesting if published. Rain fell on eight days out of ten measuring 271 inches. Our tanks are nearly all full and we can be independent of the town supply for an indefinite period. The garden is a trouble as we have not been able to get a gardener to work it.

We are pleased to hear that Douglas paid a surprise visit to Grace at Kroonstad. After ten days in bed, she is up again but of course is not strong yet. All the children have been more or less on the sick list, colds, etc. Now that we may expect warmer weather, I hope there will be a general improvement all round.

Perhaps Joe and Blodwen may be coming down during the next school holidays but nothing is decided yet. I suggest that Grace comes as well so that we can be introduced to both our new grandsons. What about it? I have been thinking – only thinking – that perhaps we might take a trip round to see the various homes – and families – before the summer comes but it is difficult to make plans far ahead. It is a few years since we did see you in your homes.

Douglas experienced a severe gale recently which damaged his veranda slightly. They too have had lots of rain. At present he is touring round the country in the interests of the mealie farmers. I think I told you that he averages 1000 miles a month in his car.

Joe writes that he and another poultry fan have been out digging up a sack full of ant eggs for their young chicks. At times we are greatly bothered with ants in the house. You are welcome to all of them if you will come and catch them.

Aunt Letty will be 83 next Tuesday and Aunt Eliza celebrates her 80<sup>th</sup> on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps some of you will find time to send her a few lines. Mary is still nursing three cases of scarlet fever at Rocklands Girls' School. They are in the convalescent stage and we hope there will not be any fresh cases. We have had a small epidemic of typhus fever in the location and that is passing over. There have been a few deaths.

On Tuesday we held our last regular Council meeting for the Municipal year. I hear the Councillors want me to take office for another year. The election takes place on the first Monday in September or as soon after as possible. I will send each of you a copy of the annual Mayor's minute when it is ready.

Dot writes that Leslie, whilst taking the children and Mrs Amm to Johannesburg to pick up Gwen, had the misfortune to break the steering rod of his car. They nearly had a serious accident but fortunately this was averted. They have now gone back to Vryburg and we hope Gwen will be much better in health. Mrs Dennison Browne has been visiting them and may call on us on her way to Red House.

The war situation in Europe seems to be darkening but I still have faith that there will not be any fighting. It is too dreadful to contemplate. We may be very thankful that we have such fine men at the head of affairs in England.

Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

We are back to normal again after having had the pleasure of Ruth's and Denis' company for some weeks, also Bessie Price. We have not heard from Bessie since she left but presume she is enjoying herself with her sister in Port Elizabeth. Ruth had a week at Grass Ridge and enjoyed the change. Harold had often spoke of the happy days he had spent there in his childhood. Aunt Kate used to teach Ruth in Grahamstown. She went to the big dam and visited round to some extent. Uncle Dudley brought her back by Friday afternoon and she was off to Grahamstown Saturday morning. You better make a note of her address. Care of Mrs Williamson, P.O. Box 131, Grahamstown. Mrs Williamson is the librarian at Rhodes University and lives out at Stone Hills about three miles from town, Denis will be able to spend some of his weekends with his mother.

Uncle Gervase spent the weekend with us as he came in from the farm sick. Doctor thinks there may be a stone bothering him and he will probably have to go to Port Elizabeth for X-ray examination. It was nice having him here for a Sunday. My last public appearance before the election of Mayor next Monday afternoon was on Sunday when I took the morning service. It was Sunday School Association Day all over the world. The three Councillors who retire by rotation have been re-elected so we are as we were. I understand they want me to take office again for another year. We shall wait and see.

I have been doing a good deal of clearing up of correspondence, old papers etc. lately. All very interesting but there is much still to do.

You will be sorry to hear that Aunt Emmie had another "turn" recently but soon recovered. Aunt Eliza too has not been too well over the weekend. Mr Cursons has been off work for a few days, caught a nasty cold but is able to do some of his work in bed.

Our electric light account should be less now that the mornings are lighter. The evenings too are lengthening. At present it costs us about ??? for light, power etc. The weather has been warmer most days but this morning (Wednesday) morning, the temperature was 23 degrees colder than yesterday morning. Yet we manage to keep well in spite of such rapid changes. We still have fire in the dining room in the evenings.

The news from overseas has been very disturbing but I still do not think we are going to have war, at any rate, I am anxious to hear the reply Hitler has sent to the last note from Chamberlain. England has done her best to avoid war.

We are sorry to hear that little Cecily has had an accident and had to be taken to town to have some stitches put in her arm. Douglas does not mention how the accident happened. We will hear no doubt when Rex passes down to school next week. We have not heard which day that will be.

Our arum lilies and jasmine are in flower. The latter have never looked so well. We have a boy doing some digging in preparation for Spring. Mom did some gardening yesterday and is paying for it today by having a sore backache. Tuesday night was 23 degrees colder than Monday night. Yet we keep well.

Thursday afternoon. We all are suffering form the lack of definite news as to peace being concluded. Sometimes the outlook is brighter then clouds gather again and so it goes on from day to day.

Letter from Gay this morning reports she is better and been for a visit. The children have been laid up with colds but were going to school again. Ruth says she has had a very warm welcome back go Grahamstown. Mrs Williamson, with whom she is staying, has been laid up.

It is Hal's birthday tomorrow. He will be twelve.

It looks as though we may get some rain again soon. It is wonderful weather we are getting this season. Hope we have a good fruit season. Thanks for all letters received. Am always interested in all your news. I am afraid mine are not very interesting but they are better than nothing. No more now except lots of love to each and all as though named. Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is Monday morning and it seems to me that as history is being made so rapidly, I must try to write something every day whilst we have the opportunity. We heard the sad news yesterday about 1.15 that England had declared war on Germany. It is a great disappointment to many as it was felt that at the last moment, something would happen that would prevent this catastrophe.

On Friday afternoon, I was listening in and heard the description of the departure of a trainload of children from Waterloo station being evacuated from London. It was tragically sad to hear them walking along platform No. 12 and getting in their compartments. Some of the children were called to the microphone and they all seemed very jolly. Of course they do not realise what is before them. Many of them had never been in the country. Everything was so familiar, hearing the guards of the train whistle and the engine puffing as it pulled out of the station seemed as though it was just outside my window. It was so realistic. None of the parents were allowed to be at the station and no one knows where they are being sent to.

We listened to Hitler's speech to his troops. It was the speech of a mad man eaten up with conceit and bombast. He defies the world. The reception over the air yesterday was very bad – in fact I have never had such bad reception. The interruptions were almost incessant and frequent failures in getting anything over. But we heard sufficient to know that war was declared. Now we are anxious to hear what our Union Government is going to do. Some think that if they agree to send S.A. troops to England, there will be another rebellion in this country. We must wait and see.

I have just had a fruitless walk to the station to see if Rex is on the train going back to Kingswood but he was not there. Jeffrey went by this train. I shall go over again in the morning unless we hear any definite news of his plans. Later. A wire was received from Douglas stating that Rex would be passing here on Tuesday night.

Parliamentary news to hand says that there is a split between General Hertzog and General Smuts on the neutrality question.

This afternoon a special meeting of the Council was held and I was re-elected Mayor for the ensuing year. Councillor Venter was also nominated but on a ballot I was returned by four votes to two. Councillor Michau (Pauletta) was elected as Deputy Mayor in place of Mrs van Rensburg. Certainly the New Year is starting under most unfavourable auspices. A few telephone congratulations have come along.

Winnie Biggs was over for the weekend playing hockey. Mary is now free from nursing at Rocklands – no fresh cases of Scarlet Fever having occurred. She is trying to get over to Graaff Reinet to nurse old Mrs Biggs who is in very poor health.

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>. The split in the Union Cabinet makes one wonder what will happen but most likely news will come through during the day. The early morning news did not give anything startling. I do hope we are not going to have any more internal troubles. I hope none of the family will be called up for active service. I have volunteered for ambulance work but my age is most likely to rule me out. I volunteered for that service during the Great War but being over 45 was turned down. I don't think I could do much now.

Later. The day has been one of wonder and surprise - disappointment at General Hertzog's speech in the House of Assembly and his desertion of support for England. His resignation has been the only way out. It is quite possible his action and that of the Nationalists may cause another rebellion in the Union. I trust and pray that such a calamity may be averted.

Mrs Sellers (Kate Owen's sister) came in with Uncle Gervase and has spent the day with us. She is coming again. She has had a wonderful time overseas and is full of her experiences. She could write a book. There is not much chance of doing much writing whilst she is about.

Wednesday morning early, 6<sup>th</sup>. I had two meetings to attend last evening, one at 7.15 and the other at 8. I had to leave both before they were completed so as to get to the station to see

Rex. The train was up to time 10 p.m. but Rex was not there. I can only suppose there must have been some mistake in Douglas' telegram. We sit by the wireless more or less all day.

September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1938. The weather has been very changeable the last few days. Sunday was quite hot, maximum 85 in the shade whilst yesterday it was only 61. It was bitterly cold last night going to the station and I was glad to have my heavy overcoat on. The wind was very keen. There has been rain from the coast up to about 30 miles south of Cradock. I saw some of the boys on the train who were going to Kingswood and they said Rex was not at De Aar. So perhaps he went through yesterday morning. I am sorry to have missed seeing him.

Maude Meyers is coming down to Rooispruit, so Mrs Sellers said, so we expect we shall be seeing her as she is coming to see Mr and Mrs Webster (formerly of Vryburg). We hope we shall see something of her.

The announcement of General Smuts' new cabinet is a great improvement on Hertzog's who have now resigned. I hope Smuts will be able to carry on. Both Hertzog and Pirrow are of German decent and naturally their feelings must have been towards the Germans. General Smuts was due here on 14<sup>th</sup> to open a bazaar in the interests of the United Party. I was going to entertain him to a public dinner but I doubt if he will be able to come under the present conditions. The Governor General also wrote some time ago that he was going to pay an official visit to Cradock and was going to let me know in August when he would arrive. He has not done so yet and I do not expect he will come now that war is on.

Thursday morning early, 7<sup>th</sup>. I am to open a bazaar for the Church of England tomorrow and next Monday have to preside at a Girl Guide and Women's Ambulance meeting. The following Sunday I suppose we shall have the usual Mayoral Service.

Of course I have always kept a record of my engagements. It may interest you to know that I attended 25 Council meetings and 181 Committee meetings during the year just completed, sometimes as many as seven meetings in one day. I also attended 103 other meetings, welcomes, deputations etc. ten services, Delville Wood, Church Services, 18 sports meetings, marriages and funerals on seven occasions making a total of 203 besides attending at the Town Office practically every day often both mornings and afternoons. I am glad to say that I do not feel any the worse for it.

Grace reports that the family is now much better. Ted has had a month's holiday from the office and has been busy with the children making a tennis court. I am glad they have the telephone but the electric light has not yet been installed. It is dull and misty morning but expect it will clear off just now. We generally have a fine day after mists.

I am sorry to hear of the riots in Johannesburg. I expect martial law will be proclaimed and then people will be shot. General Smuts has flown from Cape Town to Johannesburg. War news comes over the air – if there is any – at the stroke of each hour. So far it is very often that there is nothing. Sometimes I tune in to Daventry but the reception during the day is not too clear. I picture all of you sitting round your sets anxiously waiting to catch every word. I hope none of the family will be called up for active service but I am sure you will do what you consider right if you are.

Thursday afternoon. Letter from Dot says they are anxious about Mrs Hudson senior being alone at East London and all her five sons eligible for war service. They suggest her going to them.

I see Hertzog is proposing the forming of a new party in the Union. More trouble I fear for us. Today I have received my National Service badge in case I am called up for any service. Mom is quite herself again after her backache. I keep the wireless on practically all day so as to catch any news that may come along. It is very much restricted so far. No letter from Bloemfontein this week so far but hope all is well there.

Lots of love to each and all  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday September 14th, 1939

My dear All,

I have not been able to start earlier than Wednesday morning and I do not know if I shall continue the diary style that I commenced last week. There have been a number of interruptions – quite pleasant ones – since I last wrote. On Saturday morning Uncle Owen phoned from Rooispruit asking if it would be convenient for them to spend the weekend with us. We expected they would arrive on Saturday afternoon but only came on Sunday about 4.30. Uncle and Aunt Kate and Beryl stayed with us and Maude (Mrs Meyers) slept at Mrs Webster's, the Land Bank Manager lately from Vryburg. We all spent the evening here after service. Beryl seems well but is not strong and has to be taken great care of. Uncle Owen had some cattle to sell on the stock fair and arranged with Uncle Gervase to see to it for him as they were anxious to get home. They left us after dinner on Monday. We did not have much time to hear news of Douglas and family from Maude but they all seem to be well. Yesterday, Tuesday, Uncle Owen, Rowena, Pam and Hope were in also Aunt Jessie. So we had a house full. Hope has had measles and they thought Pam was getting it but apparently she is alright. There was no special news from that quarter. Uncle Dudley's Jean is down on her annual holiday from Johannesburg Hospital. We have not seen her yet.

Aunt Eliza has had a card from Tom Webster that he is returning from England as soon as he can. He went over to buy for his firm. Aunt Hetty has gone to live in the country with one of her sons. This will be far better than her staying in London and less dangerous if there are to be any air raids. I think she is 86 and is not able to walk much. She is wheeled about in an invalid chair.

I am not referring to the war situation as I know all of you have your wireless sets going and are in close touch with all that is going on. I am concerned, however, in the fact that at least six of you, two sons, two sons-in-law and two grandsons may be affected if called up for active service. I have received my badge for National Service but do not expect to be called upon unless for clerical work. Denis says that all the students at Rhodes have registered. I trust it may not be necessary to call up any of you.

Letters have come from each home the last two days. Thanks to all of you for your congratulations on our reappointment. I think it a duty I owe to render what public service I am capable of for the good of the community. I trust that war conditions will not be too irksome or difficult. We have already been officially advised to take steps to guard vital points in case of trouble. I hope to be able to exercise a restraining influence where necessary. Monday is Aunt Eliza's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and the following day Joe has his 38<sup>th</sup>. Many happy returns to both. This morning (Wednesday) we had five degrees of frost. I hope the fruit trees will not be affected. Everything is now bursting into leaf. I saw in the Herald today that Mr Dent of Vryburg days died yesterday at Grahamstown. Wonder how his son is doing at farming.

Douglas writes that he does not think there will be trouble in the Union. I am sure we all hope so too. We held a meeting this week in the interests of the Girl Guide and St John's Ambulance to encourage ladies to prepare for eventualities. Grace complains of feeling washed out. Baby is not giving them two good nights, seems to scream a lot. I wonder why. Pam was also in bed with a cold. Their tennis court is getting on.

Blodwen says that Roy has mumps and the rest have colds. They may perhaps come to us for the October holiday. Their doctor prescribes a month's holiday. Reg will not be going to his mother at East London at present as his brother is going instead. She is feeling lonely and the war does not make matters any brighter for her with five sons liable to be called up.

Thursday morning 14<sup>th</sup>. The weather is bright, crisp and cheerful this a.m. The war news that has come over so far is not very much but appears that Poland is having a very bad time at the hands of the Germans. We may all be very sorry for them and hope that England is not going to suffer in the same way. I do not expect more letters today as we have heard from all of you so recently. They are always very welcome. Much love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

Wednesday evening and nearly bath time but I want to make a start so as not to leave too much for the morning. It has been a perfect summer day, such a contrast to last week when we had two dreadfully cold and windy days. Frost was registered on two successive nights. The wind was bitterly cold and made one wish that we could move to a warmer climate. All the trees are coming out in leaf, the wisteria is in flower, fig trees are shooting. The only backward vegetation seems to be the vines and Virginian creeper.

Thursday early. It is nice not having to switch on the light to do my typing as the sun is shining in the dining room by 6.20. I have the wireless switched on at my side so as to catch any stray news that may be floating about. The sinking of the Courageous was sad indeed but that must be expected in war. The loss of life is to be greatly regretted. When is it going to end?

We are glad to hear that Joe's children have not had mumps and are so much better that they are arranging to come down for the long weekend next week. We do not know if they are coming by car or rail. It will be nice if they can stay longer than the two days. Hope to hear that Joe's birthday passed off very happily. You will be interested in hearing that Aunt Eliza had a very happy day. I was the first to greet her in the morning. The day was fine and quite a number of friends called to wish her the usual greetings. Some telegrams were received and many letters. A number of ladies brought flowers and presents. Rev and Mrs Weavers called in the afternoon whilst Mom and I were there. Mr Weavers offered prayer but although he was quite near Aunt, she did not hear a word. Mrs Dersley sent a cake and we sent another with E.B. 1859-1939 on it and eight candles instead of 80, which she lit and blew out. I doubt if Aunt will be able to write and thank all of her friends for their good wishes etc but if you do not hear you will know the reason. She finds it difficult to turn the door knobs so leaves the doors ajar. She is very bright and interested in everybody.



Aunt Eliza's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday

Grace says they have found the cause of baby's tummy trouble. The milk was not agreeing with him so they are getting supplies from another source. Harold, they fear, is in for Scarlet Fever and the other children have colds. However the weather is improving so we hope they will soon be better.

Ruth, too, has had flu and been laid up for a few days. She had such a nice article in the Eastern Province Herald this week on Women and the War. I am sending it round for all of you to see. Denis will be spending the short holidays at Bushmans River. All Rhodes students have had to register for national service.

Douglas and Grace both have birthdays next week. May you both be spared to see many more.

Mrs Dennison Browne wrote from Johannesburg saying she would come and see us next Tuesday on her way to Red House. It will be nice to see her after all these years since she and we left Vryburg. She has been staying with one of her sons at Pietersburg, not far from Reg and Dot. Dot reports having had a severe hail storm recently and two inches of rain. We could do with some more rain now but we have water in the furrow again. I have just been able to get a complete record of Cradock's rainfall from 1878. This is very interesting and I hope will be published. I do not think they had a rain gauge before that.

Douglas and Evelyn have both written this week. Douglas has secured a boring contract from Government and will have two machines working near Dry Harts. Some of his export cattle were on the boat the Germans tried to torpedo on the homeward voyage. They are very busy on the farm. Cecily's arm is better. We had a little letter from her. Kate Owen's sister, Mrs Seller, is to spend this weekend with us. She is going to Maclear to have a head stone

erected on her husband's grave. Our local Member of Parliament and provincial council are holding a meeting on Friday night to explain their reasons for voting with the Nationalists on the neutrality motion of Hertzog's. We English people feel very sore about it.

It is breakfast time now and I do not think there is room for more and news is also about run out. Lots of love to each and all,

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

What terrible weather we have had during the last week. One day I nearly took out my white clothes as it was so hot but the next few days were bitterly cold. The wind was most piercing. To give some idea of the changeableness of the weather, last Thursday the maximum shade was 91 and on Monday it was 51. Tuesday night the minimum was only one degree above freezing. I guess it actually froze in the more open parts of the town.

Mrs Seller spent the weekend with us. We all went to the bio on Saturday afternoon to see "Goodbye Mr Chips". It was very pretty picture and well worth seeing. I found it rather difficult to see properly so moved more forward with better result. Mrs Seller left by motor but on Monday morning. Tuesday morning Mrs Dennison Browne arrived from the north. It is very nice to have a chat over old times. She enjoyed her visit to Reg and Dot at Potgietersrus. This (Wednesday) afternoon we have taken her to the Egg Rock and shown her over the town etc. Mrs Max de Kock is coming to see her tomorrow afternoon. They met each other at Red House before. She is disappointed in not meeting Ruth here. We phoned to Hilda Collett and she came to see her. Their car broke down at Fish River so they had to be towed into town. Mrs Browne and Hilda had not met since Hilda was about 17 in Vryburg.

The Civic service last Sunday was well attended. Rev Weavers took for his subject "God bless you" and gave a very helpful sermon.

Thursday afternoon. It has not been possible to write more as there have been so many interruptions. Mrs Browne is leaving by train Friday morning so we are trying to plan a long weekend at Fish River as we have not been out for several months. We can do with a change.

We had hoped Joe and Blodwen would have been able to come to us. They had decided to come by car if they did come and Blodwen would stay a week, Joe returning by train and coming back the following week and fetching her. This morning we received word that they could not come – finances being short. We are very sorry about it but it cannot be helped.

Dossie's sister-in-law is coming to afternoon tea to meet Mrs Browne, they knew each other in Red House.

We all went to Rocklands school entertainment last evening. They are trying to raise funds for providing wireless for all the patients in the hospital. They had a full house and the children were quite good. The amount of time and energy put into the preparations must have been considerable. They are repeating the event again this evening.

Our local M.P. and M.L.A. addressed a public meeting last Friday in the Town Hall. The place was packed and I was not able to get in. However, a vote of confidence in Hertzog was carried but I doubt if either of the sitting members will get into Parliament again. One of them is on the Town Council. We get on very well together. I do not anticipate that we shall have trouble in the Union over the war – hope not at any rate. The crushing of Poland has been terrible. The Poles have put up a wonderful struggle. Anything may happen to Germany. Hitler I quite expect will either be assassinated or commit suicide. Germany will be utterly crushed before the Allies have finished with them unless they surrender and give up Nazism.

The wife of our old boy John (who was with us at East London) came this morning wanting to borrow money as John wants to come back from Queenstown. He has done the same thing two or three times before and we are not going to take him on again. The present girl is doing as well as she can but is not 100 per cent perfect. No one can expect that.

Mrs Browne has decided to go to Red House tomorrow morning so we will go to Fish River for the long weekend. There is a mixed goods train about 4 p.m. and will come back either on Monday or Tuesday as opportunity offers.

I am sorry to send such an uninteresting letter this week but there has been such a lot of interruptions yesterday and today it has been impossible to get a move on as they say. Hope you are all well.

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

As I write I am listening into Daventry. The news service put over at about four a.m. has just been missed but they are giving some nice records. The song "passing by" was very pretty. I shall try to get the news every morning as it is a far better service than from Johannesburg. We are just two hours later than Daventry. It would appear that Daventry is always on the air. Last night the reception was very bad from everywhere owing to a severe thunderstorm which passed over the town. Just twenty points of rain has been registered.

We left for Fish River about half past five on Friday afternoon by car as Neville was in. We stayed with Aunt Jessie. The weather was fine all the time. I took some work with me. I have been able to get a complete record of the rainfall at Cradock for the past 61 years and have been interested in tabulating these and taking the averages for each month and year. This has involved a lot of calculations and checking same. As a matter of fact I only completed it last evening. I do not know if the Midland News will be able to find room for it but I have written a short article on the matter which I think will be of interest. The figures show that our rainfall is decreasing over the period in question.

I am now listening in to the seven o'clock news service. I am glad to see by the news that Mussolini is not going to act as mediator for Hitler's peace terms. That is the principal item which has just come over.

Whilst at Fish River, Mr Barnes motored me to Highlands to see Willie Saunders who has been very ill again. He was in town on Friday to see the Dr. He suffers a good deal from his head. He gets up daily but is very feeble. He was pleased to see me. We also spent an afternoon at Winnie Brown's. She is slowly getting better of the effects of poisoning from eating a bad mushroom last February. She cannot speak properly yet but doctor thinks it will take a year or so before she is quite normal. We also went over to Uncle Gervase. His house and grounds are looking very nice. There is every appearance of having a good fruit harvest. I hope the hail storm we had last night did not do him damage. It has beaten our wisteria about a bit, I notice. Uncle Jack and Hilton brought us back on Tuesday morning. We were home in time to catch the seven o'clock news. I suppose Monday being a holiday, we shall not get any of your letters until today or tomorrow. We generally get them on Wednesday morning.

I notice our photo appeared in last week's Outspan and the Patriot for October, which came yesterday, also has one of me in it.

We hope to hear how Grace and Douglas birthdays passed off. We thought of them both and hope they may be spared to see many more years.

Aunt Letty is due back in Cradock tonight. She spends the summers here and winters at Louisvale. Ernest's Dorothy and her husband have been transferred to Cape Town and have taken a flat near Aunt Emmie.

Our vines and the Virginian creeper are now coming out. We are hoping a lady florist who has recently started a business here may take over the garden but she has not kept her appointment to come and see it.

Grace reported recently that her baby weighed 13 pounds and three ounces. Blodwen's is 15 pounds. We were disappointed that Joe and Blodwen did not see their way to come to us for the long weekend. Have any of you made any plans for Xmas? We have nothing to suggest at present. Anyone will be welcome if you come here. I am thinking of provisionally booking Rockcliff cottages for our Golden Wedding in two years' time. We should require all four cottages this time.

Later. Letters from Grace and Dot are to hand. Both speak of their doings on Bank Holiday. They all seem well and fit, which is much to be thankful for. I have taken to lighter clothing from the first of the month and hope I shall not have cause to regret it.

I will not add more except to say we are both keeping fit and well for which we are very thankful. Much love to each and all, Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday October 12<sup>th</sup> 1939

My dear All,

It is Wednesday afternoon, 11<sup>th</sup>. Five years ago today we arrived back in Cradock and here we are still. I seem to be as busy as ever I was and am glad to find time to write my usual epistle. I fear my letters are very disjointed affairs but I just write as I think of things. That reminds me to ask you to address letters etc. to Dundas Street. I find that often the post is delayed at the office and Mom naturally likes to get the post as soon as possible. If we were nearer the Post Office, I would take a private box but will see how the present plan works.

You all will be sorry to hear that Willie Saunders passed away on Monday afternoon. As you know, he has been suffering from a weak heart for years but there have been other complications. When I saw him on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> instant, he said it often felt as though he had swallowed some petrol and it was on fire. The pain on his chest was excruciating. He suffered a good deal from head trouble as well. I am so glad I saw him ten days ago. I got the news by 4 p.m. and at once communicated with his friends here. Eileen and one of the sons passed through by train on Tuesday morning so I took some flowers over but could not find them. But as Rev G.P. Fergusson (formerly of Vryburg days) was on the train, I asked him to see that they got the flowers, which they did. Rev Weavers took me out in his car this morning to Highlands whilst Mom went direct to Fish River with Mr Metcalf and Mr Garlake. She was afraid of being car sick if she went round by Highlands. The Service was held in Uncle Herbert's memorial hall and there was a large attendance of friends and relatives. The trouble (cancer) which I took him to England for in 1902 has never troubled him since. We were more like brothers and I shall greatly miss him. He was 77 1<sup>st</sup> July.

Aunt Letty arrived back in Cradock on Friday night. She is very well and has been along to a meal with us most days. She is wonderfully bright and well and takes a great interest in all that goes on. She is rather deaf but not as much as Mom. Honor Biggs came with her. She has been studying social welfare work in England and has just returned. She had to go on to Graaff Reinet the next day. I had the chance of a seat in the car but had to decline as my Town Clerk was away and we were expecting a special doctor from Pretoria that day on special work. I have never been to Graaff Reinet direct from here over the mountain but no doubt other chances will be forthcoming.

Grace and Joe report good rains. We are hoping our turn will soon come. It looks quite nearby as I am writing. I sent you each a Midland with some account of the rainfall at Cradock which may be of interest. Other statements may appear later. Joe found tennis balls in his guttering. We are sorry to hear that Merle has to have an operation for tonsils this week. Hope she soon gets over it. We presume Bessie is back in Cape Town as Blodwen says her other sister, Etta, has not been well. Roy is anxious to have a cowboy outfit. If any of you have a suitable hat for the purpose, will you send it along to Bloemfontein as I have nothing of the sort here.

Grace has sent us some snaps of baby Charles. He looks a sturdy chap and does her parents credit. He was not as heavy as Blodwen's at three months. They were 15 and 13 pounds respectively.

Ruth is very interested in St Johns Ambulance work in case of being required for war service. Denis has had a good holiday at Bushmans River. He has camped there with some other students.

Yesterday was Paul Kruger's Day and the Voortrekkers rechristened one of our streets. There was a big crowd at the Karroo Garden. I attended officially but was not called upon to take any part in the proceedings.

It is now Thursday morning early and I am listening in to Daventry at 6 a.m. I find this service much better than what we get from the Union. Last evening we attended a farewell social to our Stationmaster who is transferred to Malmesbury. I first met them at Polokwani where he was Stationmaster. They have been very popular here. Their only son met his death

here by accident recently. I have been asked by the Mayor's National Fund to organise help here. This is going to involve a huge amount of work of organisation etc. Mr Metcalf has already given £50 to the Fund. I see my sheet is nearly full so must stop for this week.

Lots of love from Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

Wednesday morning finds me as usual at my task. An enjoyable one I must say as I like to keep in touch with each home. I have just been listening to Daventry early morning service and presently shall listen in to Johannesburg seven o'clock news. Daventry gives a much longer news account than any of the South African stations. It is not very nice reading of the sinking of the Royal Oak in Scapa Flow. I am hoping that as Hitler cannot get any help from other nations, that the war may collapse sooner than was expected when war was first declared.

The news that Turkey and Russia are joining hands strengthens Britain's position. I am sorry to hear of air raids on the British Eastern coast. Hope Aunt Hetty is not near the scenes of these as she has left London so as to be safer in the country.

Our 48<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary passed off very quietly. We did not have any function or visitors. Had one postcard from Mr and Mrs Dersley (who celebrated their Diamond Wedding a year or two ago. Douglas and Evelyn sent a congratulatory wire from Pretoria and Joe and Blodwen one from Bloemfontein, both in golden envelopes. Many thanks for same. We have very much to be thankful all these years that we have been spared to each other and the family.

Both Grace and Joe have sent us snaps of their babies. We are very pleased with them and wonder when we shall make their acquaintance. We have not heard from Vryburg for a long time and wonder why Douglas and Evelyn are in Pretoria, where they sent their wire from. Suppose we shall hear in due course. Ruth celebrates her birthday on Friday. I am glad to hear she is so well satisfied with her accommodation at Stonehills.

Uncle Joe would have been 87 last Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup>. Aunt Eliza has had a sloping passage made from her kitchen door into the yard so as to save the awkwardness of getting up and down the steps. Hope it will be a success. We are busy making a summerhouse at the top of the garden. I am using old materials that I happen to have with the addition of a few poles. Hope to get some runners to grow over it.

Merle does not have her operation until 26<sup>th</sup>. Her tonsils and adenoids are to be removed at the same time. Hope she soon gets over it.

Grace writes that baby was christened on Sunday last. He behaved himself as a "proper" child should do. He has also been vaccinated and is getting on very nicely. Ted tried to secure a swarm of bees last week but now we hear they have taken wings and flown away.

Thursday morning 19<sup>th</sup>. Dot writes that her boys have written to Father Xmas asking for a bus conductor's and a cowboy's suit. Joe says Roy's desire is for such. I am sorry to hear from Dot that it seems necessary for her to be X-rayed for gall trouble. She will go to Johannesburg sometime for it. Hope there is nothing serious. I had a letter from Mrs Metcalf (Vryburg) saying that her brother, Bevan Wookey, died on 9<sup>th</sup>. H has been in Valkenburg for about 35 years. I used to go and see him when we were at Observatory. He was always quite normal when I saw him. What a release to all concerned. Edith Collett writes that Mrs Pitt, with whom she has been living for some years, has a son. She lost her first child. Aunt Kate's sister, Mrs Seller, arrived last evening on her way back from Maclear where she had been to see to the erection of a headstone over her husband's grave. She intended going on to Port Elizabeth the same evening but there is no down train on Wednesdays so she will be leaving this morning.

Yesterday we got most of the framework up for the summerhouse. Of course it will be of rustic construction. Have bought poles from the park and will cover it in with reeds etc. Have also erected a swing but have no children or grandchildren to make use of it. We have not had a line from Douglas or Evelyn for some weeks except the wire on Saturday from Pretoria. I know he is very busy and travels about a great deal. Aunt Eliza keeps about the same as usual. Aunt Emmie has at last been able to get a small house near to Gladys and she will be very happy there I feel sure. One of Josie's girls who is at school in Cape Town will live with her until Xmas holidays at any rate. I will not refer to the war news as you all have your wireless sets. It is all very terrible but I do not see how Hitler can carry on. Lots of love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

Wednesday morning again finds me at my desk. Two months today will be Xmas Day. We have not made any plans as to how we shall spend it and so far we have only heard that Reg and Dot are looking to go to Vryburg.

An advertisement appeared in the Midland "wanted, a furnished house for six months from January or February. I made enquiries and the lady has been staying in town for some time with an invalid daughter but wanted a house higher up the town if possible. She came and had a look round ours and is very favourably impressed. We said we would not let it under £12.10.0d per month furnished but on thinking it over, we have turned it down. For one, the party wanted the option of renewal – and whilst we are wanting to pay you all a visit some time, we feel that six months in war time and the uncertainty of everything, as well as my official duties, it does not seem right that I should be away for such a long period. The heat of summer too would be a strain. Had there not been war, we might have gone at the beginning of this month but way has not opened in that direction. Perhaps in the autumn the outlook may be more favourable. Needless to say we shall welcome a visit from any of you.

The summerhouse is to say completed and is better than I anticipated. We have used 500 reeds for the roof and have used all the old palings for the sides with wire netting above the palings. I bought poles from the park for the corners and roof. Two iron standards bolted together from the centre support and the military table-iron legs and wooden top – is in the middle with the iron standard supporting the roof in the middle of the table. The next job is to get runners – roses, morning glory, honeysuckle etc. to grow over everything and then we shall have a very beautiful place for plants, afternoon teas etc. etc. The "house" is 14 x 12 ft and nine feet high. Of course I have not been able to do the work myself but have employed a man to do the job. A swing is already for any child that comes along to use it.

Our honeysuckle is nicely in flower and our new roses are doing well. On Monday afternoon we had a sharp hailstorm. Fortunately there was not much wind with it so it did not do much damage. Gardens in the upper part of the town suffered a good deal. No doubt the effect will be seen in the number of exhibits on the Flower Show which I have to open this Wednesday afternoon. Recently I have fixed up our electric kettle alongside the bed so I can switch on the same and we have early tea at any odd time without having to go to the kitchen. It will be very convenient, especially in the winter.

Perhaps you will remember the lady and gent who sit just in front of us in church – Mr and Mrs Eric Brown - his mother recently returned from a trip overseas. As soon as she reached Cape Town, she heard of her daughter's serious illness on a farm near Kimberley. Mrs Brown was not well when she landed but at once left by train for Kimberley. She was so ill on arrival that she had to be taken from the train to the hospital where she died shortly afterwards. Her husband was organist here and died in East London last year. Mrs Brown was also buried there. Now within a few days, the daughter has also died. We are very sorry for our friends. Aunt Eliza foretells that the same thing may happen to me - that I shall be rushed off to help one of the family.

We have not heard from Vryburg for some weeks. We wonder what Douglas and Evelyn went to Pretoria for. Perhaps Douglas is wanted for the Flying Corps. Grace writes that the children have not done so well the last quarter at school owing to their being absent through sickness. They hope to pull up this term. Ruth writes that Denis has to be in the dentist's hand having a number of stoppings done. She had a happy birthday. Rex and some of the cousins are spending today – half term day – with Ruth. It is very nice of her to have invited them. Ruth finds it too inconvenient staying at Stonehills so later on will come back to live in Grahamstown. Blodwen says she will not be going to Cape Town until baby is passed the bottle stage. She wishes me to say that they will not be sending Xmas presents to the children of the families this year owing to the depression. I think it should be the rule in each family. We do not in any case

expect presents.

Thursday morning, the Flower Show was a great success yesterday afternoon. The roses and in fact every exhibit was a picture. No doubt there would have been more had it not been for the hail storm.

Letters came yesterday from Douglas, Dot Evelyn and Rex. Douglas and Evelyn had gone to Pretoria in connection with deputation work regarding farming matters. They saw the Amblers of course. Douglas has a lot of knocking about in connection with the export beef industry etc. It is nice his having Arthur to look after the farm whilst away. He consulted a specialist re his eyes. They have had a lot of rain in Vryburg, so the prospects should be good. He says Gwen Hudson is back from her operation. He saw Trixie and baby in Johannesburg. Baby is very good he says. Of course his is an authority!

Dot is talking already about schools for her boys. She does not care for their local school and in a few years time will have to send them to a boarding school. She thinks Pretoria or Johannesburg climate would be good for them. I am sorry to say she does not seem to be in too good health herself.

Aunt Letty comes along most days and has a meal with us. She is very bright and gets about a great deal. Mary is still nursing old Mrs Biggs at Graaff Reinet.

The sloping arrangement at the kitchen door at Aunt Eliza's instead of the steps seems to be much more convenient for her than having to use the steps. Unfortunately her house leaked in a number of places owing to the hail which fell on Monday afternoon. We also suffered a little from the same cause. It leaked in workroom right in the middle of the room onto the table where I had my Collett birthday book. It has damaged the cover but fortunately the book was shut at the time. I have been working at the record to bring it quite up to date and have not finished it yet.

I must stop now and do other work. I hope you are all keeping well and that we shall hear good news of all in due course.

Los of love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

We are glad to hear that Merle is making good progress after her recent operation. They will be much more comfortable now that they are buying a chesterfield set. Uncle Jack Collett phoned on Sunday asking for their address as he was going to Bloemfontein by car to a horse sale. We hope he has been able to see them. Rains appear to have been general as Joe reports some results from their gardening. We have not yet been able to get anyone to take over ours but we have a boy who comes three days a week and does what he can. We do not appear to have suffered any ill effects from last week's hail storm. We have had some hot days. One day it reached 97 in the shade. My rain record for October is 2.32. The average for the past 60 years is only 92. So we are well above the usual. 1939 is going to be a better rainfall than last year.

Glad to note that Grace has been playing tennis again. They have servant troubles there as both the boy and maid are leaving.

Evelyn writes that they had a very nice week in Pretoria recently. They stayed with the Amblers. Arthur was left in charge of the farming and Cecily stayed with Frank's wife. Rex writes that he would like to be a veterinary surgeon. We have not been down to Grahamstown yet to see him. One does miss not having a car for such trips. Ruth has kindly had some of the boys out for the half term holiday. Ruth will be going back to live in Grahamstown again as it is too awkward being out of town.

Mom has been having backache lately but a porous plaster seems to give relief. The garden does her great credit.

Dr Scholtz's account for my inoculations amounted to over £11. I think they did me good as I have certainly been in better health since. I am still able to get up early and do a fair day's work. The war is giving a good deal of extra committee work in organising relief work etc. The Mayors of the Union are trying to raise a million pounds for war funds. We have not done much here yet.

Mr A.N. Wilson's nightly talk on the war situation are very illuminating. I am still of the opinion that the Germans will have a revolution when they become aware of the real facts. I do hope it will not be necessary to call up any South Africans for active service.

Aunt Letty drops in most days and has a meal with us. She goes to see Aunt Eliza pretty often. I am hoping Aunt Eliza will honour us with a visit one of these days. I have offered to fetch her by taxi when she feels able to undertake the task. I don't think she has been here this year at all. She is always busy about her house, cooking, mending etc. etc. She has had Mr Thomas' room done up this week which has involved everything being taken out of the room. Aunt Emmie seems very pleased with the cottage she has at last got near to Gladys. One of Josie's daughters, who is at school in Cape Town, is living with her at present. There is talk of Eric's son, Pat, going to her next year to go to school there.

Later Uncle Gervase, Aunt Rouena and Hope came to dinner. They are all well on the farm.

The Council is mending the road and tarring from kerb to kerb. In doing this I found that a storm water pipe from our front garden was in the way so had it removed. I had heard that the man who built this house had an underground tank under the foot walk and in removing the pipe, found the opening to same. There was a two inch galvanised pipe in the hole eighteen feet long. This I have removed and find the depth of the tank is at least twenty feet. No one knows the length and breadth of it. I only wish it was at the back of the house instead of the front as it would be most useful for rainwater storage. It would appear that the owner used to let the roof water go into this tank and then pumped out on to his front garden. I am closing in the tank by placing a flat stone on the opening in the ground in case I may find some use for the reservoir later on. It would mean digging up the whole of the pavement to find the extent. The former owner died a year or so ago. He had promised to come and show me where the tank was but never did. Lots of love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

It is Wednesday morning and I am trying to listen to the six o'clock news from Daventry but the atmospherics are very bad so I have one ear at the wireless and the other to the ticking of the typewriter. We have been having strange weather lately. Some days I have been wearing my heavy overcoat. I started wearing my light clothing but had to change back to winter. No frost has actually been registered in the garden but the wind from the south east has been very trying. Lots of rain has been falling in different parts but none here.

Last night we went to an organ recital in the D.R. Church. The programme was very long and the church was not filled. The big piece was "From the Cradle to the Cross". It was very well rendered. I am afraid Mom has caught a nasty cold owing to the cold wind which was blowing as we went and returned.

The annual church social was held last Thursday. The attendance was small. The mere men again provided the refreshments and the programme. Of course that was good.

Some time ago I offered to compile and index the marriage and baptismal registers of the Wesleyan church. It has been a bigger job than I bargained for. The records go back to 1842. In one register there are over nine hundred entries. I shall get through it in time.

Uncle Jack has been to see us since his return from Bloemfontein and reports all well there. He gives us news that Joe and Blodwen are contemplating coming to us for Xmas. We are glad that someone at any rate is coming otherwise we should be very lonely. We have booked a turkey from Enid. Everyone was more or less excited about the East London trip this time last year.

We are sorry to hear that Ethne Collett, who was with us for some time in fact some months when I was so blind, has been dangerously ill at Healdtown. She had an operation for appendicitis and complications followed. Her life was despaired of but a miracle happened and she has been able to be removed to her home and is getting better.

On Monday afternoon I accompanied the M.R.H. on his fortnightly trip to Mortimer to see the Clinic established there by the farmers of the area. The nurse, a Hollander, is doing excellent work. She visits the farms and carries medicines with her and attends both European and non-Europeans alike. She has both general and maternity qualifications. She is very much like the Dutch nurse who was Sister in the Port Elizabeth hospital where I had my operations. She speaks English fairly well and seems very interested in her work. I am trying to get Fish River farms to do something on the same lines in their area.

Ruth writes that she will be living in Grahamstown again next February. She had Rex and other cousins out for a day recently and they had a jolly good time. Denis has his exams on now. He will be fruit picking part of the holidays at Golden Valley.

Joe has bought a Chesterfield suite second-hand and seems to have got a bargain. Both Joe and Grace report that my last week's dear all did not arrive on Friday as it usually does. I cannot understand why as so far as I can remember, it was posted in usual time. If you will return the envelope any time the letter does not arrive in usual course, I can try to trace where the delay has occurred.

Later. Grace says she is having baby revaccinated as it did not take the first time. They have had heaps of rain lately and cold. Dot also reports very cold weather and misty rain. Reg is taking her to be X-rayed in Johannesburg today. Hope the result will be satisfactory. The boys are to stay with Mrs Amm whilst they are away.

Rev Hornabrook writes to say he and his daughter, Marjorie, are arriving here tomorrow evening and will stay with us. He is interested in the property at the corner of Bree Street next to the D.R. Church parsonages. This is where I was wanting to build. The party who bought it has just died and Mr Hornabrook has a £500 bond on it. It is to be sold on Saturday. Mr Hornabrook was the first minister to occupy the present parsonage. He is a dear old man, over 86.

Love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I am late in starting although it is not seven a.m. We have the pleasure of Aunt Letty's company since Monday last. She is wonderfully active and is always bright. Unfortunately she is getting very deaf, like Mom, but for all that, we are able to enjoy conversations. She is going to Fish River on Sunday with Rev Weavers and will stay with Aunt Jessie for some time. She has been staying at Spelmanskop for some time. Last Sunday was Mary's birthday. She is still nursing old Mrs Biggs.

Rev Hornabrook wired last Wednesday afternoon, after I had posted my dear all, cancelling his visit. He had already taken his ticket and his daughter, Marjorie, was coming with him. We were sorry not to have him. The property was sold on Saturday for £391, so Mr Hornabrook will drop about £20 on his bond. My first notes should have been that Mom has quite got over her cold after spending more or less of two days in bed. All of you report having had extremes of weather. We too have had cold and heat but not any rain this month so far. We have plenty of water in the furrow and are still using rainwater for Mom's plants.

Yesterday afternoon I attended the Boys School gymnasium display on the sports ground. This is the first time they have given such and it was very good. I should have liked Joe specially to have seen it as he was so good at this at Y.M.C.A. at Observatory. Mom and Aunt Letty did not go but met me on the way back in the park. Douglas and Evelyn's friends, the Websters of Vryburg, walked back with us.

Tomorrow we have a very full day. We are invited to the Rocklands breaking up concert and morning tea. Mom is to present the prizes to the girls. In the afternoon we are giving a sort of reception to the Commandant of the National Women's Auxiliary Service who is coming to address a public meeting here in the evening at which I have to preside. We have invited about 36 ladies to tea here in the afternoon and have put the catering out so as to ease the work. I hope everything goes off as it should. Later on will be the Boys' school and Wilson school breaking up functions to attend.

We are sorry to hear that Ted is suffering from boils and is likely to be off work for a few days. They seem to have been troubled off and on with this complaint for some time in Kroonstad. Otherwise they all seem to be well. Blodwen says baby's weighing 18 pounds now. We have not heard how much Grace's baby weighs lately. Blodwen is taking a course of slimming. Her flower garden is giving a good deal of pleasure. They have had lots of rain. Joe says they cannot decide definitely yet about coming to us for Xmas. We shall be very lonely if no one comes. Last year we had Grace and family.

Reg and Dot went to Joburg last week and were thrilled with the beauty of Pretoria. It was Jacaranda week and the trees were very beautiful. Dot was subjected to a number of X-ray photographs but they do not know the result of the examinations yet. We do hope there is nothing seriously wrong with her. The little boys stayed with the Amms near Potgietersrus and seem to have enjoyed themselves very much. While they were away, a butcher's business in which Reg is financially interested was burgled and about £50 stolen from the safe.

Douglas is as busy as ever. They have a tractor now and Arthur is busy ploughing with it. They have had lots of rain and hope to get a lot of seed in. We have not been able to get down to Grahamstown to see Ruth, Denis and Rex yet. Do not know if they will be having any breaking up functions but in any case, we shall look to see Rex as he passes on his way home. Denis is going to earn some money during the holidays by picking fruit at Golden Valley. Quite a number of students do this ever year. Ruth is looking to take a holiday and write up some history of the Bathurst district.

I do not know that there is any other news of interest to record this week except to say that we are very thankful for the good health we are permitted to enjoy and also thankful for the continued good news we hear from one and another member of the family.

Much love to you all, Dad



34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I cannot understand how it is that my last circle letter was received a day late again. Will you please return the envelopes when this happens again and add the date and time you receive the same and I will take the matter up with the Postal Authorities here.

Our reception last Thursday afternoon went off very nicely, about 30 to afternoon tea. We put the catering "out" so as to save making the various cakes etc. Everything was very nice and the ladies say they enjoyed themselves. The lady speaker, Commandant Mrs Munnik, encouraged the ladies to combine irrespective of political colour, creed or social standing. By the way, we find that she is the second wife of Mr Munnik who was Chief Mining Engineer of the Transvaal under Paul Kruger. His first wife was sister of Archie Geard of Vryburg and sister of Mrs Willie Collett of Hannetsburg who Reg took us to see. The public meeting over which I presided in the evening was also a success and quite a number of ladies signed on for whatever they felt they could undertake.

Sunday was Temperance Sunday and I was allocated to address the Salvation Army Sunday School. It was the hottest day we have experienced since we came back to Cradock. The thermometer stood at 102 in the shade. No wind or clouds about. However, we have survived it. Monday was also hot, only 100 in the shade. Fortunately a cool breeze sprang up in the evening and 11 points of rain fell during the night. I have changed into my lightest under gear with the result that I have contracted a sight cold. I have been quite free from such all the winter.

Aunt Letty, after spending practically a week with us, left on Sunday morning with Rev Weavers for Fish River. It was service day there. She will stay some time with Aunt Jessie. Mary is still at Graaff Reinet but looks to come back soon. She went with us to the prize giving at Rocklands on Friday morning. Mom, of course, distributed the prizes most gracefully. One of the little dots presented her with a beautiful bouquet.

We have had another very nice letter from Rex and have also been invited to attend the prize giving at Kingswood next Friday evening. We had promised that if any of the grandchildren came to Grahamstown to school, we would try to go and see them some weekend. We have never done so yet so we are going down by train on Thursday evening and will be back again either on Monday or Tuesday morning. Of course, we shall see Ruth and Denis and have asked Ruth to book accommodation for us.

Up to the time of typing, we have not had any report re Dot's X-ray examinations at Johannesburg. Hope to hear before I post this. Joe and Blodwen have decided to come to us for Xmas so we shall not be lonely. Baby is 20 lbs.

Wednesday morning. Letter from Dot gives particulars of her X-ray examination. There is curvature of the spine but no stones. Dr thinks there is an adhesion and wants further examination next month. Suggests an "op" but Dot wants to try diet or physical exercises first.

Ted is still troubled with boils but hopes to resume duties this week. Grace has very inefficient servants but the children help where they can. David writes asking me to set him some copy for writing. This is some compliment. Had a nice letter from Rex. He says Kingsley is going to school in Pretoria and will stay with the Amblers.

Later news from Grace says she still has servant trouble. Their boy was run in and fined and has left them. Dot expects to go to Joburg for further examination next month. Alison has offered to help Aunt Eliza if she would go to Cape Town but Aunt has declined the offer. We all think it would be a good plan if she had accepted as she could have better comfort and attention than she gets here. She has been having some rooms renovated which has caused a lot of extra work and worry. Nurse Edith Collett is coming to Fish River on a visit next week. We hope to see her here.

As we have had letters from all except Vryburg and my sheet is full, I may as well post this (Wednesday) instead of tomorrow. Love to all, Dad.

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday November 30th, 1939

My dear All,

The event of the week has been our visit to Grahamstown. We had a comfortable journey down and were pleased to notice that the shunting at Alicedale of which we have complained so often, was conspicuous by its absence, both going and returning. Denis and Rex were at the station at seven to meet us. Ruth had booked accommodation at Lexham private hotel – really a boarding house. We found that it is run by Mrs Bertie Elliot, formerly of Cradock and sister-in-law of Miss Silverside who married a Mr Elliott. Miss Silverside was a friend of Cousin Kate Crewe and worked for me at Butler Brothers for some years. Incidentally, Mrs Elliott used to live in this street next to the Park and Aunt Eliza lived with her. She was pleased to hear all about her. Aunt Eliza was also pleased to hear of her and thought she was in Queenstown. In addition to the house Mrs Elliott runs, she has an annexe on the opposite side of the street, in which we were well accommodated. I at once recognised this as being the house where I stayed on my first visit to Grahamstown just 52 years ago. The occasion was the Queen's Jubilee Exhibition. Mom, Aunt Jessie and Rosa were also staying at the same place. Strange wasn't it?

The same afternoon, Friday, we took a taxi and visited Mr and Mrs Turberville at Highlands, about twenty miles from Grahamstown. These are old friends who used to live in Cradock. Mrs Turberville was a Miss Tilbrook whose mother occupied Aunt Letty's house in Bree Street when Uncle James went to England. At that time I was boarding with Aunt Letty. Both Mr and Mrs Turberville have been more or less invalids for a long time. Mr Turberville has been confined to bed for several months and Mrs T is almost a confirmed invalid. I have not seen them for very many years. Ruth went with us and all were pleased to renew friendships. Ruth is, of course, related to the Tilbrooks. Years ago, Mr Turberville played against the English cricketers in South Africa. He came out for his health. Mrs Turberville is sister of Mrs Ross Roberts of Cape Town.

The prize giving to Kingswood boys took place in the Town Hall on Friday evening and was a brilliant function. The Judge President made the presentation and delivered an excellent address. Neither of our nephews won prizes but we understand the number awarded has been restricted this year owing to war conditions. On Saturday morning we did a little shopping. Kingswood has school in the mornings so we were not able to have Rex out. Ruth was busy getting off an article completed. Rex came along in the afternoon after Mom and I had "done" the Botanical Gardens. These are looking very fine just now. Ruth was playing bowls so we took Rex with us and watched the play. We were accorded a very warm welcome by the players. It had been very hot during the morning but whilst watching the play, it turned very cold but am pleased to say we did not take cold. In the evening we looked in at the library for a while and to bed early. By the way, Ruth is going to occupy the same room that we had when she comes back to stay in town. It is a nice large front room with fireplace with bay window and she will be very comfortable there. She will have to go across the road for meals. Sunday morning to service and again in the evening. Rev Channings conducted the evening and we met his mother and wife afterwards. They are some distant connection of ours from Devonshire. We had invited Ruth, Denis, Rex, Guy and Jeffrey and Uncle Norman's two boys and George Collett's son to dinner. So there were ten of us all together. I think they enjoyed the change. The boys and I went through the museum in the afternoon whilst Mom had a rest. Ruth accompanied Mom and I to afternoon tea at Mrs Garnett's. Her daughter and a daughter of Mr Garrett Brown (Ruth's Uncle) was also there. Of course we have known the Garnetts for years at Cape Town etc. He was buried at sea at Cape Town years ago. Mrs Garrett looks to go to Cape Town during the school holidays.

Ruth and Denis accompanied us to church in the morning. It was nice to see such a crowd of Kingswood boys marching into church. They occupy the gallery and join very heartily in the singing. I was surprised to see such a small congregation considering the size of the town. Although Grahamstown is probably several times the size it was when the church was built, it is

evident that people are either losing interest in their church or are attending other places of worship. Possibly wireless and motors are also responsible to some extent for the falling off. It is greatly to be regretted. Denis, Rex and the Collett boys saw us off at 9.30 p.m. after the service and we duly arrived home about seven a.m. on Monday morning. We found everything in order here and have settled down to our usual routine. It seems as though we have been away much longer than three days.

I have written the above before breakfast on Wednesday. Later. I should also have mentioned that we had the pleasure of sitting with Mr Putterill, formerly of Vryburg, at the prize distribution. He is still a land surveyor and was interested in hearing news of the family. Perhaps some of you may remember them when they lived near the Library at Vryburg in Stella Street.

We are glad to hear from Bloemfontein that Joe and family have decided to come to us for Xmas. They hope to leave early – about four a.m. – on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> so as to avoid the heat of the day. Douglas also writes that perhaps they may also come but we must not be too sanguine. It will be very nice if they can manage it. We can easily make room for all and shall be only too pleased to do so. We can get extra rooms for sleeping nearby. However, we must wait for further news before making any definite plans.

Wednesday afternoon. We are supposed to go up to the opening of the Bowling Club for the season presently so must hurry on.

I notice that some of you report the late arrival of my last week's dear all. If it does not reach you on due date, please return the envelope. Last week I posted the letters on Wednesday afternoon but Joe says he only got his on Friday morning. The Postmaster tells me that if the letters are posted on Wednesday afternoon, you (Joe) should receive it on Thursday morning. Letters from Grace and Dot this morning report all well. Ted at work again but not quite rid of his boils. Children's holidays do not begin for another few weeks. Dot has not decided when to go to Joburg for next X-ray examination. She is contemplating trying Vin Diggilans treatment before deciding about having an operation. We should like her to come here but nothing decided. Reg may take the boys to Vryburg for the holidays.

Ernest's daughter, Joan, has secured a position on Rockland's staff here as Kindergarten Mistress. She has been teaching in the Native territory for some years. Mary is still at Graaff Reinet. Aunt Letty is at Fish River, I do not know where she intends spending Xmas.

I think I have written enough for this week so will post on our way to the bowling club. Please let me know when you receive it. I am posting on Wednesday afternoon, 29<sup>th</sup>.

Much love to all

Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

Yesterday was a very busy day and I was not able to commence my letter. It is now nearly nine a.m. and we have been over to the station to see Rex pass on his way home. Whilst at breakfast, the phone rang and all I could get was that Cape Town wanted me. Someone at Mount Nelson Hotel spoke – apparently one of the staff – who said they knew nothing about a call so I enquired again at our local office and they informed me that someone rang that they could not find my number and wanted me at nine. So I anxious to know who it is.

Rex says that he expects he will stay with Arthur if the others come down for Xmas. He does not care about going away from home. They are having a dance in Kimberley tomorrow night and he expects he will stay over there as Arthur is going to it and will take Lynne home by car.

Later still. My typewriter has had to have a new ribbon put in and have only now (3 p.m.) got it back so I do not know if I shall be able to catch the post this afternoon.

Well, I was saying I had another call from Cape Town at 9 and instead of it being from Aunt Emmie or one of the family, it was from Sir J.B. Robinson about a letter I wrote to him last year asking him if he would honour an unfulfilled promise his late father had made of a donation of £500 (500) towards the hospital. He wants some further information on the matter and says he was promised by a former Mayor that the Karroo Garden would be named after his father. I am going into the matter.

Grace writes that she is expecting some visitors from Cape Town after Xmas and says perhaps Reg and Dot may be going to them for Xmas. This will be nice if it comes off. Trevor has two teeth already and Merle has not been very well, had to have the doctor but hope it is only a passing phase. Joe hopes to be able to get a few days off and so be able to stay a week.

Joyce Townshend has moved nearer to Aunt Emmie and little Raymond has developed mumps on top of moving. Aunt Emmie has her servant troubles but has now been able to secure a regular hand. Eric, we hear, has chickenpox in the family.

We have taken the Esse stove into use again in view of the hoped for increase in our family circle. It is working very well and the girl seems to understand it. We have also lengthened our dining room table.

This has been a very busy week so far. Yesterday I “opened” the native sports day at 9.30. At ten I attended the Licensing Court and I am glad to say that restrictions are to be placed on the quantity of liquor the Coloured people are allowed to have. This, I hope, will stop a lot of the drunkenness which goes on in the location. In the evening, we attended the prize giving function in the Town Hall for the Boys School. Every word was in Afrikaans so we were not able to follow it but next year it is all to be in English. I do not think this will give satisfaction. I had to leave the meeting to attend another and so it goes. There are any number of collecting lists out and not a day goes by but what there is one or more call for something.

Rev Weavers and family left early this morning for a fortnight at their cottage at the Wilderness. The youngest boy has been down with measles and was only allowed up yesterday.

It will be a year on Saturday since Ruth’s mother and Uncle Willie passed away. How the time has flown. As we get older, we must expect changes. Uncle Walter is now living with Cyril Collett of Victoria West way. Olive is also with him. Aunt Lettie is still at Fish River and expects to spend Xmas at one of the farms. Guy has a teaching position in Joburg for next year. Alison is going to Cape Town early in January. We all wish that Aunt Eliza was strong enough to go with her but she won’t hear of it.

We have already engaged a nurse girl for Blodwen’s children and will get an extra gallon of milk daily for them. We will see that none of you starve. We hope nothing will prevent the contemplated visits from materialising. I must really stop now as I have another meeting to attend at 5.45. Hope you are all keeping well,

Lots of love to all, Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
Thursday December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

I must tell you an experience I had a few nights ago. I was specially asked by phone to attend a Toc H meeting. I had already attended seven meetings that day. I went. Mr Metcalf senior was there and as he lives close to us, I said I would go home with him. He has a short cut through his garden. It was quite dark but after locking the gate after him, we walked down the garden but could not find the right path. For a wonder I had not got my pocket torch with me. We got into a small part of the ground and he was quite confused as to where he was. We each had our walking sticks and felt our way as best we could. Fortunately there had not been any water-leading done as we crossed furrows etc. After trying for about half an hour, we gave it up and went back to the gate through which we had come and in and then came round the block and down Kruger's Lane. We were both greatly amused as Mr Metcalf uses the short cut daily and has done so for years. It truly a case of the blind leading the blind. It would make good comedy if written up. Mr Metcalf called the next morning and impressed upon Mom that I had not been to any hotel. He is a great sport.

Edith came to us from Fish River on Monday. She is much better in health than she has been for some time. We are hoping she will be able to stay over Sunday. Saturday being Dingaans Day and a public holiday, I have been asked to distribute the prizes at the Speed Boat Races at Lake Arthur in the afternoon.

Owing to the holidays, we are having our last meeting of the Council today. The Town Clerk is leaving on holiday the next day. Most of the Councillors are going out of town.

Suppose we shall pay our usual visits to the hospital, old peoples' home etc. on Xmas Day. I applied for permission to visit the gaol but was refused but am allowed to send sweets for the prisoners.

We have not heard definitely if Douglas and Co are coming but last letter was very hopeful. Joe has applied for extra days so as to have the whole week with us. I have provisionally booked a room next door for extra sleeping if necessary. The turkey will be delivered in due course.

For some time we have not been getting our post as early as we want so for next year I am going to try the experiment of hiring a private box. This means I shall get the post on my way to office every day. At present it comes after I have gone to office. The box number will be 141 so from January 1st you can address so.

We have not heard from Dot if they are going to Grace for Xmas, but hope to hear today.

So we are in for another war it seems. What is going to happen to Finland by Russia? It will be a sorry Christmas for many people in many lands.

I hope I am not too early to wish you all a very happy Christmas and bright New Year wherever you may be.

Later. No post this week from Douglas or Dot but hope to hear soon. We are all well. The summerhouse is finished and morning glory is beginning to grow. We can do with some rain but do not want five inches in an hour and half like Uitenhage had recently.

Letter from Ruth she is going to Port Alfred for Xmas. Denis is working at Golden Valley over Xmas superintending fruit picking and earning some pocket money.

Thursday afternoon. Postcard from Dot posted at Joburg says she has had more X-rays taken but does not know the result. Nothing decided as to where they will spend Xmas. Nothing from Douglas either today.

Hope you are all well.

Lots of love to all,  
Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1939

My dear All,

This is the longest day of the year but it will be a few weeks before we notice any difference in the hours of sunshine. The weather has been very changeable, some days hot and others cold. Last Saturday Mom and I went out to Lake Arthur to present the prizes at the Regatta. It was very hot there but fortunately a shower fell during the afternoon which improved conditions. Edith did not care to go as she has such a terrible cough. Only once have I heard such a cough as she has. She is very bright and lively and we have enjoyed the week she has spent with us. She has gone back to Uncle Jack's and hopes to see any of us out there during the holidays. She has only met Grace and Joe's families.

Whilst I think of it, Aunt Eliza has asked me to say that you all must excuse her if she does not acknowledge cards or letters addressed to her. Her hands are sometimes very puffy and painful. She is always pleased to hear of or from any of you. She is wonderfully bright and interested in all that concerns all of you. She seldom goes on to her stoep but one day this week, Mr Thomas took her by taxi as far as the book shop for her to see the improvements that have been made there. She says it was such a job to lift her in and out of the taxi that she will not try it again. We have asked her to come to us on Xmas Day but she has declined as the exertion and excitement would be too much for her. I do not think she has been in this house half a dozen times. However a friend has offered the loan of a wheeled chair so I am hoping she will get about more than before. She is looking forward to Mary's return to Cradock as she has a room nearly opposite. Mary has finished her duty at Graaff Reinet as they have at last been able to get someone from Maritzburg to come and look after old Mrs Biggs. Mary will spend Xmas with her Mother at Grass Ridge and is due on Saturday afternoon.

Ernest's wife, Alison, is going to her daughter, Dorothy, at Cape Town for a month or so on 30<sup>th</sup>.

One morning last week Mrs Beamish, who lived opposite to us when in Bree Street, had morning tea with us and Mr and Mrs Stock also joined us. Her daughter used to come across and read to me when I was so blind. They are living in Port Elizabeth now.

I have posted a number of parcels to Grace and Dorothy as we do not expect to see them – much as we would like to. Hope they arrive in time. We have also posted to Ruth and Denis. Joe's parcels we are keeping here but there is just an element of doubt if he will be able to stay a week as he is acting charge-man at the works. They may come by train instead of car. We do not know what Douglas and family are going to do. The last word was that unless it rained, they probably would not come. We had a nice letter from Lynne this week but she does not say a word about coming. We are hoping Rev and Mrs Legg may pop in today (Wednesday) on their way to Queenstown. It will be nice to see them again. Later. The Leggs have not turned up.

Letter from Grace says she is hoping to hear from Dot. We did not get any news from her or Douglas today. Hope we will tomorrow before posting. We received over sixty Xmas cards and letters today. It is nice to be remembered by so many friends. We are distributing amongst the poorer Europeans 53 parcels consisting of 5 lbs flour, 10 lbs meal, 2 lbs raisins, 8 lbs sugar, 2 lbs coffee and 2 lbs prunes. Last year we did about the same.

Ted sends a cutting from their local paper showing how well their children have done at school. Ruth is looking forward to her holiday at Port Alfred. Denis is enjoying his job at Golden Valley. He will be working all through the holidays.

Thursday afternoon. The post has just come and brought another 60 cards and letters. Dot is now at Kroonstad and the little boys at Vryburg. Suppose Reg is also going to Kroonstad. No operation is needed for which we are very thankful. No word from Douglas so do not know if they are coming. Cable received this a.m. reports the passing of my brother John's widow – Aunt Hetty. Aunt Eliza had a letter from her this mail. She was well over 80. Have still a lot of shopping to see to so must close. Hoping all will have a very happy Xmas wherever you are.

Lots of love from Dad

34 Dundas Street, Cradock  
as Thursday December 28<sup>th</sup> 1939

My dear All,

I am starting early so as to give you as much information as possible of our activities over the festive season. As a matter of fact, it is six a.m. Christmas Day. The household is all quiet at present but a pillowcase is hanging up on the beds of Roy and Merle ready for them. I have just listened in to the News from Daventry – our S.A. Stations are not coming on the air until 11 a.m. I am glad to say that all appears quiet on the Western Front and also in Finland. May it remain so for all time. My letter will of necessity be very scrappy as I shall have to embrace any odd moments that may offer. Some of us will be attending service at 7.30 this morning after which breakfast etc.

Let me go back a bit. Friday afternoon we had a wire from Douglas saying they could not come down and would phone to us a six p.m. It was past seven before he got through. We were sorry to hear that Gwen Ambler's operation was causing anxiety but the news that day was a little better.

Joe and Blodwen left Bloemfontein about four a.m. and arrived here at 12.30 after a very comfortable journey. The children had a couple of good naps in the car and baby was quite good. We are charmed with baby. He is so good and friendly except with the nurse girl, our maid's sister. Hope he will soon get over that. Saturday evening we phoned to Kroonstad but the reception was so bad we could hardly distinguish what was said, but gathered that Grace had a fresh cold and that Dot had duly arrived.

We did not do much on Saturday except that Joe and I went up to see how the work is progressing at the new reservoir. Roy was quite interested in this too. It will be some months yet before it is finished and ready for an official opening.

This morning Roy and Merle accompanied me to morning service. There was a good congregation and appropriate address from Mr Weavers. The children sat quite still and joined in the singing of one of the Xmas hymns they knew.

Of course the unpacking of their pillow cases was a great event for the children and some of the presents are put away for further reference. Uncle Jack was the first to phone up – about half past six – conveying greetings. Then Spelmanskop folk phoned and we arranged to pay them a visit in the afternoon. Xmas dinner was served a little earlier than usual and was greatly enjoyed. We had ordered a turkey cock from Enid and this arrived about 11.30 on Friday night and was hanging till Monday morning. It was beautifully tender and all the other necessary accessories to Christmas fare were much enjoyed. Blodwen brought a pudding from Bloemfontein. About three we left for Uncle Bertie's. Joe does not remember ever having been there but then he was too young to remember. Of course Blodwen had not seen the place before either. Mom and I have often been there. It is one of the prettiest farms of any of the Colletts' nestling amongst the hills. All were interested in looking for dassies, baboons etc. as we went along. It has a nice lot of budge birds. We brought away a supply of apricots. The flowers there were greatly admired. Uncle Bertie had damaged an eye the day before but fortunately the pupil was not affected. We got home about seven. I should have mentioned that we had a phone call from Kroonstad at half past twelve and the reception was quite good this time. They were all well and looking forward to Xmas fowls for dinner. Grace and Dot both spoke and all seemed well. In the evening, I tried to get through to Gladys on the phone but by past ten they had not managed to get through. The Post Office said it might be another hour or more before they could get connection so I cancelled the order. On Sunday evening after nine, Blodwen and Joe had a talk with Mrs Price and the family at Plumsted. I forgot to mention that after breakfast, Mom and I paid our usual Xmas visit to the patients at the hospital and took flowers to them. We also visited the old peoples' home and gave each a hankie and had a talk to them. We all went to see Aunt Eliza in the morning. Am glad to say she was as bright as ever and is charmed with baby. She has recently been as far as the bookshop and is hoping to get a wheeled chair in which she can be got about. So there is hope of our having a visit one of these days. I think we have

received more Xmas cards than ever before this season. Quite a number of letters have also come to hand which I shall try to answer in due course. Most of the above has been written on Boxing Day.

It is now Boxing Day afternoon. We had arranged to spend today at Fish River but Mom did not feel equal to another day in the car so Joe, Blodwen and the children left after breakfast for morning tea at Uncle Jack's, Uncle Gervase after that and dinner at Aunt Jessie and afternoon tea at Grass Ridge, calling at Uncle Norman's on the way home. How far they may have accomplished their tour remains to be told after their return this evening. So Mom and I have had a quiet time at home. It has been nice and cool today so perhaps we may go out later on. Cards continue to arrive and are duly ticked off in my register for future reference. I could tell you the names of every person to whom I have sent and received cards from during the last ten years or more but I will spare you that information. Mary returned from Graaff Reinet on Saturday and proceeded to Grass Ridge on Sunday with Mr and Mrs Weavers who were out there for service. Aunt Letty is staying at Grass Ridge at present.

Letters from Evelyn, Lynne and cards from the children came today. So far as I can see, Reg has been the lonely one this time but is looking to go to Kroonstad to fetch Dot later on. The little boys have gone to Leslie's farm for the holidays. Our old boy John turned up this morning for a Xmas box. He says he recognised he made a big mistake in leaving us and I know he would like to come back again but we have no work for him now. We gave him some food.

The children like the swing and summer house. Figs are ripening and the grapes are coming on well. Hope we do not have a hail storm. Last evening Joe and I took the opportunity of looking through some of my snaps and have destroyed a number which are of no particular interest. Others I shall send to one and another who may like to have them. I am hoping to find time to do a good deal of work on sorting out photos and pictures which have been waiting some years to have attention. It will be very interesting. When Edith was here, we turned out some of my childhood days which caused great merriment, especially the fashions then in vogue.

Although we asked that no presents should be sent, we do appreciate those which have arrived. I am well supplied with ties and hankies for some time to come. Our grocers sent us a lovely two pound box of Rountrees chocolates, whilst the proprietor of the Fisheries sent a four pound box of sweets. Blodwen thinks it must have cost well over a £1. I don't know when we shall get through it as Mom is not very fond of chocolates. I have counted well over 250 cards and letters received apart from another 100 or so "official" ones received as Mayor. The letters I shall reply to in due course. So many have referred in conversation and otherwise to the verse on our card. I took it from one received a year or two ago.

Tuesday evening. Joe and family returned about six having had a very enjoyable day. They did not carry out their full programme, not getting to Uncle Gervase or Uncle Norman. They had the pleasure of meeting Aunt Letty and Mary at Grass Ridge. Baby won the hearts of all. It has been delightfully cool all day but no rain which is needed.

It is now early Wednesday morning 27<sup>th</sup> and it looks as though we are to be favoured with another fine day. Blodwen had never met Aunt Letty before and was pleased to have done so. She thinks she is wonderful. Baby, she says, is the image of one of her grandchildren. She has just woke up from her nap and seemed confused as to where she was when she saw the child. I find I have made a mistake re the above. It was not baby but Roy who is so like Kathleen's boy, Michel.

Wednesday afternoon. We have been out to the warm bath and Joe, Roy and Merle had a bathe. We had afternoon tea there and returned about five. Thanks for all letters received, will try to answer them shortly. We shall be glad to hear how you all have spent the holidays and trust you are all well and happy.

Lots of love to all for the New Year. May each succeeding year be a better one than its predecessor.

Dad