

Letters from
Cpl. Thomas James Quinn
No. 4245, 32nd Battalion, A.I.F
from
Hurdcott
1917 & 1918



With thanks to [Diana Quinn](#) for permission to use the letters

Thomas James Quinn

Blog

“Thomas James Quinn wrote letters home to his parents (all addressed to Mr W. H. Quinn), about his experience of World War 1. His Irish parents were upset that he had signed up to risk his life fighting a war for England's King.

Like many other returned soldiers, throughout the remainder of his life Thomas refused to talk about his experiences during the war despite being decorated with a Military Medal.

A box of approximately 100 letters from Thomas were found years after he and his parents had died during a restoration of his parent's home and these shed some light on what actually happened. They were originally discovered, read and typed by Thomas' grandchild, Thomas Quinn and his wife Deb into a book of limited publication. The original documents are now part of the Australian War Memorial Museum.

This is an electronic version of those letters; however they are based on the book prepared by Thomas Quinn Jnr, not the originals. They are presented here, almost 100 years after they were written, as a broadly-accessible version of this story of war time through the eyes of a young Mid-North South Australian farmer.”



Below are the letters that were written by Thomas James Quinn from Hurdcott Camp in Wiltshire, England.

Hurdcott; January 31st 1917

My Dear People,

Just a line to let you know I am quite well. When I got back from London Friday night there were two letters here for me, one from Nell and one from Mum & Annie, Dated Dec 11th 1916. That is the last mail I have got. I was very glad to hear you were all well, but was sorry that you were worried about my pay.

Of course that is the usual course for reinforcement sergeants but I did not know it when I left. The reason is this - the rank is only acting & any big bug can revert you at any time if you are not up to your job. So the C.O. of a troop-ship generally reduces a few of his N.C.O.'s on the way over. Our Colonel reduced a good many. Well you see, if they were paying out C.D. pay while you were on the trip they would not know of the reduction in pay till you landed here & it would cause a lot of inconvenience getting it back. So they wait till they get the news from this end before paying it out. But I suppose you have got mine before this. It would be about £14.0.0 for the trip over. After that you will get no more till I am gazetted a sergeant so that I can make a fresh allotment.

It is the simplest thing to get reduced here - if you lose a prisoner when you are Sgt. of the guard, or when in charge of an escort, they court-martial you & then take your stripes off in front of the parade of perhaps a 1,000 men. So it does not pay to take any risks with prisoners here as some of them are pretty hard nuts. I saw one Sgt reduced here. He was in charge of an escort & got drunk & one of his prisoners got away. So they took his stripes off & he is in the clink now, doing 30 days detention for his carelessness. So you see you have got to be right on the mark here.

Yesterday I was sent to Marlborough with a man as escort for a prisoner - it must be about 60 miles away. We caught a train at Wilton, a small town about five miles from here (we always catch the train there if we are going London way) & went up the London line as far as Andover Junction & then we had to take a train going on the Cheltenham line - to Marlborough. We had about an hour to spare so had a bit of a walk round the town. It is rather a nice place. We had a look at an old water wheel flour mill - the first I have seen. It was a good wide wheel about 6 or 8 ft wide & the water was running under it & turning it around.

Australian soldiers are pretty rare there - as we could tell from the remarks we heard - but they know you a mile off on account of our hats. You are not allowed to wear your cap here & all the English tommies wear caps.

We saw a big college there & a lot of the boys playing hockey. Well after a bit of a stroll we went back to the Police Station & got our prisoner. He belongs to our Coy & came over with the 7/32, the same unit as H. Tralaggan. He cleared out of camp about a week ago without any pass or anything & got caught up at this place. I knew I would have to do some rum jobs when I joined the army, but I did not know I would have to do police jobs. I had a pair of hand-cuffs in my pocket but he came quietly so I did not put them on him. He got 28 days clink today for being absent without leave for a week. When you are Sgt of the Guard here which happens here fairly often. You are something like a head jailer, with a bunch of keys locking & unlocking cell doors to let prisoners in & out. There are about 3,000 Australian soldiers floating about England absent without leave. They came over for the trip not to go to the war & it is on account of them that it is almost impossible to get leave except the four days London leave.

I will now tell you about what is said to be the coldest snap they have had in England for twenty years. When we were coming home from London there was a dry frost on with an East wind. The air & ground was absolutely dry in fact so dry that the dust was blowing. But it was some cold I can tell you! All the water taps were frozen & a good many of them burst. The only place we can get water is at the warm bath house. The water buckets in our huts were frozen solid & after we warmed them over the fire a bit we could turn the ice out in a solid block. I have not seen anything like it before. For ten days the thermometer has not been above

freezing point & there is plenty of skating going on about England. A good lot of the Thames is said to be frozen over.

The cold is playing up terrible with our men. A lot of them get colds & pneumonia & a good many Australians are dying over it. I do not mind so much except standing on the Parade ground while the Battalion does a flash fall in. Of course when you have a rifle it is cold on your fingers so I bought a good pair of leather gloves (lined) in London. But it is cold calling the roll & we are not allowed to wear overcoats on parade. While I am moving about I do not notice the cold & I sleep warm enough at night, you can get as many blankets as you like, but I appreciate your nice warm socks that I have, but I would not wear a scarf as your throat gets too soft.

The climate here is ever so much drier than I thought it was there has been very little rain here since I came here though they say it rains a good lot here a bit later on. The ground, in England seems to be mostly a few inches of soil over a rocky bottom. The farmers here use single & double furrow ploughs & they plough very light "scratchings". They are always manuring it with rotten straw etc.

They are making great efforts to organize the production of the country & orders came through for P.C.s to cultivate every inch of ground they had to spare for potatoes etc. & the millers have got to put at least 5 percent of oats or barley crush in their flour. British people generally wake up a year or two after they ought to. They are also short of sugar here. We get plenty of tucker here. The sergeants have a mess here. We pay sixpence a day & it is well worth it the way we are fed. They say we live as well as the Officers.

Sunday Feb 4th.

I have just come back from Church Parade. We have mass here every Sunday morning. The Priest is the best preacher I have ever heard. I am sending you a bundle of Post-cards views of London. I hope you get them alright. I was sorry to hear Aunty Ada had been ill but hope she is well again. I will be writing to some of them soon but I have been pretty busy since I came here. I do not remember the Miss Tohill that died. So Mr Davidson will be leaving Mt. Bryan. I hope they get a "strict" teacher in his place don't you John? There is a rumor going round here that there are so few men enlisting that they are likely to close Mitcham & send the men to Melbourne & that all N.C.O. & Officers Schools are closed. I don't care anyway as it makes no difference to me.

Well, I must close now & post this as the Australian Mail closed today. Hoping you are all well as I am except for a bad cold which everyone has here.

I remain Your loving Son & Brother

Tom.

It is snowing lovely here now.

Hurdcott; February 18, 1917

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite well, & doing alright. Things are getting quite pleasant here now the weather is not nearly so cold & we see a bit more of the sun. It is quite daylight now when we get up at about a quarter to seven & does not get dark till about six at night.

Anyhow this camp will do me alright, but I am anxious to get to France. The Officers tell me I will have to wait & go with our own men. All the 10/32 are here & they will have to go before we do. So it will be a few weeks before the 11/32 go over, but they have promised to let me go with the first draft. Although I am having quite a nice time here & know well enough that France is absolute H***. I cannot feel satisfied here.

The 12/32 arrived here last night, they had a long trip over 9 weeks the same as us. I expect they will be about the last reinforcement we will get according to the figures of enlistment that I see in Australian papers. I saw in the Record a great account of the Honour Roll at Mt. Bryan & also one for Mt. Bryan East. Quite nice to see our names showing. Frank Richards has arrived here from Hospital he looks jolly well but his knee is a bit stiff. He is working in the cook-house. He tells me that Mat Griffen is in France. Wally Arnolds wrote back & said he had met him over there.

By the way, they caught our old troopship the *Afric* & torpedoed her as she was going back to Australia. It was just as well there were no troops on her or things would have been a bit mixed. It is a pity for such fine boats to be sunk as the *Afric* was a fine cargo boat.

I did not go to Church this morning but went to a Lewis gun demonstration instead. This gun can get rid of bullets at a wonderful rate & it is very easy to handle & fire. It rained a little here the night before last so I suppose the rainy season will soon start.

We had quite an eventful day last Tuesday as the King reviewed us at a little camp called Fovant about three miles away. You see the King was reviewing a division of Tommies before they left for France so he came & had a look at us. It was the first time I had seen the King. He is only a small man & looks rather worried with his responsibilities. Of course he was accompanied by a swag of big bugs but they did not stop with us very long. Of course we all "presented arms" to him.

On Wednesday I went up to London on escort duty. I had 4 soldiers with me & brought back 3 birds for the clinks. I should have had 4 but one had to be charged in London so I could not bring him. We had a very nice trip but we were only in London 2 or 3 hours. I saw a few flying machines that day they just look like big dragon- flies spinning along in the air. There is an Australian mail to come in within the next day or so. We have heard over here that since the new Submarine orders they do not publish the dates of mails leaving Australia. There is one to leave here for Australia within a day or two.

Well, I must close now, hoping you are all well & that things are going alright at home. I have got rid of my cold now & feel very well.

I remain,

Your Loving Son & Brother,

Tom

Hurdcott; February 25, 1917

My Dear People,

Just a line to let you know I am quite well & still here. We have not had an Australian mail for about 3 weeks. The last one is a good while overdue. I suppose it is shut up somewhere dodging submarines, which are pretty plentiful just now. So I have not heard anything of how you are getting on since Dec. 20th.

I went to Church this morning, our Priest's name is Capt. Chaplin Kennedy. He was awarded the D.S.O. for great gallantry, in bringing back wounded in an action in France. I saw an account of it in an Australian paper. He is a splendid preacher & knows men to an ounce.

This afternoon I went for a walk to a little village called Broad-chalke. We went through the Church there. Every little village here has a Church, mostly very old & some of them must have cost a lot of money. Some of the better ones would be classed as Cathedrals in Australia. The one we saw today was so old that I suppose one time it was a Catholic Church, but now it is C. of E. It was repaired & altered a bit in 1846, & is now in fairly good order. They have got a lovely pipe organ. One of the soldiers played it and it had a wonderfully strong tone.

The weather is rather nice here now, it rains a fair bit, but generally at night. If it rains in the day time we are not kept out in it, but carry on with lectures in the huts, so it doesn't affect us much.

Tell Nell her Frankie is quite alright here. I will close now, hoping you are all well.

I remain Your Loving Son & Brother

Tom

Hurdcott; March 4, 1917

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite well. I received two letters & a Record last mail. One letter from Mum & Kath of the 25th & 28th Dec. & one from Annie of Jan 4th. I was very glad to hear you were all well & doing alright. You must have a fine lot of hay at A.V. [Almondvale] now. I hope the wheat turned out well.

I saw in the record that poor old Mrs. Lomman died She seemed very ill when I saw her last. I got a letter from Bert Lilley the other day. He is still in France & is quite well, but it has been dreadful cold & sloppy over there. He saw Mat Griffen a day or two before he wrote - he was alright except for a cold. Frank Richards had a letter from Wally Arnolds a few days ago, he was well & had seen Lorrie Bell in France. He said Lorrie seemed pretty well. Frank has been classed CI here by the Medical Board on account of his knee. So he will not be sent to France but will be kept here on home duties.

I went to London as conducting N.C.O. for a chap who had been "doing time", for being "absent without leave" on Friday. He had been serving his sentence in the Wandsworth Detention Barracks & I had to bring him back to camp. Those Barracks are a red-hot place to get into particularly for an Australian as the Staff there 'have a set on us. They have the reputation of being able to tame any man no matter how wild he may be. But everything there is very clean & I think it is better for a man to go there than loaf around in those "clinks" here, where they are often filthy dirty.

Well when I got this chap we came back to Waterloo Station (that is our Station in London) & we had ten minutes to catch a good fast train to Wilton. But he begged me very hard to let him go & see his sister in Oxford Street, London. You see he was born in London & he has 5 or 6 sisters around about London. He promised to play the game & not try to duck off. So I told him if he did duck off & I met him again he would never forget it, as of course I would catch it red-hot if he got away from me. So we let the train go & I took him around to his Sister's. She seemed to be housekeeping for some people who kept a drapers shop. Her husband is at the war & she has her little son living with her. She was very nice and made us some tea. So after staying an hour or so we left & caught the next train back to Wilton. His name is Camp & he hasn't tried to get away yet but says he wants to go to France in the next draft. He has no money now & if you have no money the M.P.s soon pick you up. So when he gets a bit of tin he might shift out for a little holiday - but that has nothing to do with me now - although they have put him in my platoon.

I have been detailed to go to a bombing school at Lyndhurst. It is the best bombing school in England. I was mighty wild about it at first as I thought it would stop me from going to France with our unit. But it only lasts a fortnight or so & I am to go next week so it will not keep from going to France as I thought it would. When I found that out I never made any fuss but will do as I am told which of course all good soldiers do.

You see our Australian certificates do not count for much over here as all the Military work here is of a much more up-to-date style than we were taught in Australia. We are to go on the ranges & fire our Musketry course this week.

Hoping you are all well. I must close now as I want to get to bye-bye.

I remain

Your loving Son & Brother

Tom.

Hurdcott; March 11, 1917

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite well & doing alright.

I got two letters yesterday one from Sis and one from Mother - dated Jan. 9 & 21st. I was very glad to hear you were doing alright & had got my cable. We had a lot of snow here Friday & it had been raining ever since so the snow is all thawed now & it is not very cold now. I am going to the bombing school at Lyndhurst tomorrow. They have altered the run of things here now, before you used to do all your training in one Company till you were fit for France, but now you have to go through the 4 Coy' s. When you arrive first you are put in D Coy, then C, then B, & finish up in A. When you leave A Coy you go to France. This change was started yesterday & we all shifted huts. We were transferred from D to B Coy. Previously each Battalion had a Company of its own which trained all its reinforcements. It will mean that there will be a lot of shifting as the men will only be in each Coy two or three weeks. But it is part of a soldier's training to move about anywhere.

We do not have to eat brown bread yet as although they are cutting down, the rations for civilians they are still looking after us pretty well.

I am enclosing in this letter a receipt for the sum of Ten Pounds (£10.0.0) which I gave another Sgt. here. He is only drawing 1/6 a day & was rather low financially & as I had nearly £20.0.0 on me I gave him ten. He was in the original Battalion, was wounded in France & is now one of the anti-gas instructors here. His people will pay the money to the credit of your account at Elders. When they do this & send you the receipt for it, you are to send this receipt I am enclosing to his people at the address on the receipt. It saves him the trouble of getting the money cabled over here. If my duty pay goes on much longer I will either have to bank it or else cable it home to you as I do not want it here. I expect his people will write to you as soon as they hear from him. I will repeat this information in another letter in case this one goes astray.

I was very glad to hear that A.V. [Almondvale] was putting up a fairly decent crop & I hope that eventually you will get a good price for it. I hope the parcel of flannels you are sending get here before I go to France but I am pretty well equipped that way at present. I will be at Lyndhurst for about a fortnight & I believe the grub down there is not too plentiful so I suppose I will have to buy up a bit at the canteen which I have not had to do since I joined the army. My weight now is 11st.11b. so I guess I am not doing too bad.

Tell Nell her Frankie is alright & is still in the cook-house. A good place to be. Well as it is nearly bed-time I will close now. Hoping you are all as well as I am.

I remain,

Your Loving Son & Brother,

Tom.

They are sending a Photo of the Sgts of this Training Battalion to some of the Australian papers so you might happen to see it. Tom.

Hurdcott; March 25, 1917

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite well. I got back from Lyndhurst last night after a fairly successful course there. It was not the starvation place they said it was. I could live on the grub pretty comfortable although some of the others used to growl plenty & go out & get their tea in the town.

We spent an hour or so in Southampton when we were coming back & we were in Salisbury for a while. There is a lovely Cathedral in Salisbury.

Most of the other chaps in the school secured girls in Lyndhurst but not me. I have not been able to find Frank Richards since I came back. They say he has gone to Weymouth but I suppose you will hear from him.

There has not been any Australian mail in the last fortnight. There is a sort of a scrambling pack up here today, with rumors of France etc. but I am taking it very cool & unconcerned as I think it is only a sort of a (see how quick you can pack up). But I hope to be on my way to France inside a fortnight & I will be very pleased to be going over.

I suppose you will soon be starting tilling now, they are planting potatoes & things every where here now, potatoes are very scarce in England.

After Tea.

Things are quietening down a bit now, but one company is standing by ready to turn out at any time. I am not in it at all, but if I thought it was France I would be. The rumors we hear would make you laugh. Germans landed in England etc., but I think it is all smoke.

Well I must close now, hoping you are all well as I am.

I remain

Your Loving Son & Brother

Tom.

Hurdcott; April 1, 1917

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite well.

There has been an Australian mail in but I did not get any letters or Records. We are all ready for France & will be leaving here for a depot known as the "Bull Ring" in France on Tuesday. I am very glad to be going although I have had a pretty comfortable time here. When we get to this depot we will be fitted up with rifle & gas helmets & possibly steel helmets. Providing we are physically fit & able to pass some training tests, we will be sent on to our Battalion inside a week from now. I do not know exactly where our Battalion is now, but I do not think it is far from the line. I am in splendid condition & weigh in at about 11st. 10lb. & am in perfect health

We are issued with two sorts of gas helmets. If one gives out on you, you change it for the other. Providing you get your helmet on you are alright in a gas attack. There is a danger of a gas shell bursting near you, as they don't make much noise. It is quite possible to get a whiff or two, too much for the good of your lungs. We have to go through a gas chamber before we are allowed in the line.

They have issued us all with leather vests & water proof capes & also a very strong pair of black boots & they are very particular that every man has a good set of underclothes etc, before he leaves here. The scare I told you about in my last letter all fizzled out & they say it was only a sort of a general mobilization for what object I do not know.

I told you in a letter awhile ago that I had lent £10.0.0. to a Sgt Cutts here. In case that letter went astray the arrangements were that his people should pay the money into Elders to your account & you were then to send the receipt I enclosed in the letter to Mrs. C.C. Cutts, 1 Hardy St., Goodwood.

They are cutting down the men's rations a bit here now on account of some shortage on account of shipping etc. It is not a very good place to go on short rations here as a fellow gets a considerable appetite over here. But our mess is still the same, but they rose the fees to 5/- a week. I do not know how they will grub us in France but I hope they don't starve us too much.

Tuesday April 3rd.

We had a very heavy fall of snow here last night & everything looks lovely this morning, it is the heaviest fall of snow I have seen.

We are leaving for France to-night, it will be a bit sloppy marching to the Station. There is going to be a big review of Australian troops on Friday by the King & Duke of Connaught at a place about 15 miles from here. They are giving the men some route march every day, to get them fit for the march. I will miss that as I will be in France.

I have not heard anything of Frank Richards since he left here, there would be a possibility of him returning to Australia on account of his knee, as the cold & wet of the trenches would very likely make it "crook" again. I think it is very probable that my mail has been going to France lately as after a unit is over here awhile they send their mail straight on to the Batt, although none of our 11/32 have gone over yet. There is about 90 of us going in this draft, & some more of the other Battalion's men.

Well I must close now. Hoping you are all well as I am.

I remain

Your Loving Son & Brother

Tom

1918

Hurdcott; January 19, 1918

No. 3 Command Depot

No. 5 Camp

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am doing alright.

I have been here nearly a fortnight now and according to my own opinion, I am nearly fit for active service again. This camp is only a few hundred yards from where I was living here last year.

I noticed it a bit cold here in the huts after the steam-heated ones at Dartford, but, it is not nearly so cold as it was last winter. We had a little bit of frost and some heavy falls of snow & a lot of rain. Last year it was very cold & dry at this time. We have practically nothing to do here in this camp. Every few days we are classified by the M.O. & as you improve you are sent along to other camps & have to do fatigues, drills & guards. I will stay here as long as I have nothing to do. But as soon as I am sent drilling etc. I will put in to go to the overseas depot & then to France. Our boys are having an easy time in France now & I guess they deserve it.

We wear our uniforms here so I have finished with "blues" for this trip, in Milton & Dartford you were not allowed out in uniform & if you wore your overcoat, you had to have a blue band on the arm. This is so you cannot get the good and joyful liquor which makes the boys sing. There are a lot of "pubs" in England and a lot of drinking is done here. The women drink a lot too & come into the bar to drink it. Of course I know there are plenty of "hussies" who drink in Australia but they do not generally go into the bar to drink it. I have got a very nice uniform & will look fairly decent on leave.

I wrote to the Australian Hospitality Bureau & got a very nice letter from the Secretary. She tells me she has plenty of invitations for men on furlough to spend a few days at private houses, & as I think it would be very nice to stay a few days at a private house. I will go & see her when I go to London.

I intend to go to Ireland & it will not be my fault if I do not get some fun out of my fourteen days. I hope the Sinn Fieners do not hang me when I get over there.

It is not much of a game stopping in London as the place is fairly swarming with Australians. I want to get away where we are not so well known.

We have a fairly decent time here - concert parties at the Y.M.C.A.s and the old Picture show is still going. I am enclosing a card of some of the badges on the hills here they are made of white stone. There are a lot of them on the hills here of different Regiments. There is a big map of Australia & I will send it to you. I saw a pack of hounds out the other day & a considerable number of ladies and gentlemen after them, but, they did not stir up any fox while I was watching them.

Well I will close now, hoping that you are all quite well.

I remain

Lour Loving Son & Brother

Tom.

P.S. We got another parcel from the Red Cross the other day, more tobacco & Sweets. I swapped my tobacco for chocolate.

Hurdcott; January 27, 1918

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite alright.

I received 3 letters yesterday; 2 from Mum (Sept 25th & Oct 25th) and one from Sis (28th Oct) & I was glad to hear you were alright.

I received your parcel this morning it was quite alright. Leather waistcoat (a regular beauty) shirt & flannel, 2 pairs socks, skull cap from Eva Thomas, chocolates, cocoa, housewife & smokes.

The cocoa tin burst & got over everything. It burst in the parcel I got from you last Year too but the letter I wrote telling you about it went down on the *Mongolia*. The tins are not properly soldered and do not stand the rough handling.

The waistcoat is not necessary here in England especially as it has been very mild so far but, it will be splendid in France. The shirts are of course very acceptable although I have a good new lot of underwear here & socks are always welcome especially in winter.

In France, when the summer comes on, we hand in our waistcoats, cardigans, rain-coats etc. as it is impossible for us to carry them about, & then when the winter starts we are issued with them again. If they did not do this the troops would dump them anywhere, even if they had to pay for a new lot next winter. I used to carry a terrible big pack last year in France but I was so fit & strong it did not trouble me. I guess I will travel a bit lighter this summer.

I saw in a list here where Augie Pohner was going home. I suppose Cyril Collins was very glad to get home. He had a good long spin over here.

Mum mentioned in her letter that Roy Tralaggan had sent in the £5 that I gave Henry in France. Some of the December mail from Australia here has, I believe, been lost at sea.

Sis tells me that Charlie Dare was married alright & was spending his honey-moon at Mt. Gambier. I suppose poor Claire has got another boy or two by this.

My wound has quite healed up & I pulled the last dressing off last night after over 14 weeks dressing. It has left a lovely clean scar which I will carry as long as I live. I am quite fit for furlough now & I expect to go shortly. One of our Sgts in France went to Paris for leave (they are giving Paris leave to N.C.O.s & men as well as officers). He had such a good time that he does not want English leave but, wants his 14 days in Paris. I would like to see Paris if I got a chance.

I am enclosing a map of Australia on the hill here at Hurdcott. It is done with white chalk stone & is longingly watched by the troops camped here.

I suppose you will be nearly finished harvesting by now. I hope you did not have too much trouble getting it off. Well I must close now hoping you are all well.

I remain

Your Loving Son & Brother

Tom

Hurdcott; February 3, 1918

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am getting on alright.

Things are very dull here and I am just about stuck for news.

I struck Roy McBride here the other day, he has been wounded too but is pretty alright now.

My classification is B1A1 now and unless I dodge it I get a bit of marching and Physical Jerks. I expect I will be going on Furlough next Thursday.

I got my Phiz taken yesterday and will send you one when I get them.

I am enclosing a P.C. of the Rising Sun on the hill here. We had a little rain yesterday but it is fine to-day and not too cold at all. I hope the weather is good when I am on Furlough. We have church here and I have just come back. The priest is not as good as a preacher as the one that was here last year.

I strolled into Wilton yesterday - it is pretty quiet there. We had some pretty good concert parties here last week.

Well must close now. Hoping you are all quite well as I am

Your Loving Son and Brother,

Tom

Hurdcott; February 23, 1918

My Dear People,

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite alright. I came back from Furlough on Thursday after a most enjoyable and interesting trip.

When I got back I got 5 letters, one from Hilda Pohner (Oct 14) one from Kath (Oct 14) 2 from Annie (Oct 14th & Nov 18th) and one from Nell (Nov 21st). In the last two you knew that I had been hit. I also got three parcels from home: one from Siss & George & one from Mt Bryan Red Cross circle. I was mighty pleased to get them as I had given up hope of getting them. I told you before that I had received the parcel with the waistcoat from the M.B.C. people. I wrote to Hilda thanking them but of course the mail route is a risky one now. I have sent you some books of views of Ireland & some Sinn Fien literature which I hope you get safely. I have got a lot of postcards and some little souvenirs to send yet but I don't want them to go on one mail.

I was very sorry to hear Frank Kelly and Charlie Burton were killed & I hope Ralph Thomas has been found alright. I think I will soon be going to Sutton Veney now as I told the doctor this morning that I was quite fit for

France. You see I have had a real good time & I think it is nearly time I went back and done a bit more.

I will now give you a description of my trip through Ireland. I left Custon Station (London) Thursday night at 8.40pm and went right across England about 300 miles with only one stop at Crewe to Holyhead. I then got on the boat and went over the Channel in about 3 hours (it is 64 miles) and landed at Kingstown (Dublin), at 6 o'clock. I got in the train there and went straight to Killarney arriving there at dinner time on Friday. Had a look over the Cathedral there. It has not been finished very long and I believe some priests went to Australia and collected a lot of money to help finish it. Saturday it was rather wet so we went to see some lace at a convent in Killarney. They are on Red Cross work now as there is no market for lace. I got a couple of handkerchiefs or doilies which I am sending home to Mum. The lace is made by hand and the finer sorts are fairly expensive.

Sunday morning I went to Mass and then with another Corporal and a honeymoon couple, went in a jaunting car for a drive around the beautiful lakes of Killarney.

It is indeed lovely scenery. On Monday I went to a Fair at a little place called Killarglin (about 30 miles from Killarney). The people in this part are supposed to be the most backward and uneducated in Ireland but, I believe as honest as could be. At the Fair there were cattle and people so thick in the street you could hardly walk through them. The crowd (girls & all) push and bump as bad as a lot of soldiers rushing for pay or dinner. There were a lot of cheap-jacks etc. They're much the same as a show in Australia. All the stock were bought and sold privately.

On Tuesday I went to Cork. It is a very old-fashioned town with about 100,000 inhabitants. There was a bit of a strike on there. A tobacco manufacturer there was paying the girls 3/6 a week for 10 hours a day and they struck. They had his place picketed and there were a lot of police there to keep order. The Irish police as very big, fine men and they do not want there to be any squibs either. I can tell you one afternoon they were escorting two or three fellows down the street and there was a mob of 200 or 300 chasing after them and boo-hoing something splendid.

At Limerick there was some trouble over a steam crane that was being put up. Some of the dock labourers thinking it would do them out of a job. One evening I was standing on the quay and a waggon belonging to the people putting up the crane was being escorted by about 20 police along the street. A yelling mob was following it. Some police who were guarding the yard rushed out with rifles and let the waggon in. Then the police rushed the mob and drove them off the quay like a mob of sheep. I take it that these are quite everyday occurrences in the poor misgoverned Ireland.

On the Wednesday I went out to Blarney castle, about 10 miles from Cork, and kissed the Blarney stone. It is a very pretty place.

Thursday I went to Limerick and then on to Dublin Saturday night. I had not heard or seen much of Sinn Fein till I got to Limerick but I went to a lecture there on the Dublin Rebellion by one of the men who was in it and sentenced to death but was eventually released. I had my eyes considerably opened by what I heard and saw there. A good many of those present were in the uniform of the volunteer Republican Army. I did not think they would be allowed to wear that in public. They have officers and I saw a good bit of saluting being done by the privates. The Officers wear Shamrocks instead of stars on their sleeves. Some of the speaking was done in Gaelic and it is Sinn Fein's idea to get rid of everything English. Government, Language and all. I am afraid they are taking on a hopeless task. Any one of them would cut your throat for a rifle. So when the Irish soldiers come home on leave from France, the police take charge of their rifles till they go back. Of course everybody had their eyes on me but I clapped and hurraed with the rest when they sang songs and gave recitations some of which I have sent in a bundle of Sinn Fein stuff. It seemed a bit for me to be wearing a British uniform and cheering rank Sedition. I would have given quids to have had Uncle Jimmy with me.

Anyone I spoke to always wanted to know what part my grand-parents came from - but I do not even know

what county they came from (terrible disgrace) you must write and tell me as it would be quite easy for me to trace some of my poor relations if I went to Ireland again. They also pointed out to me that it was on account of bad English laws that my people had to leave Ireland. But I don't bear England any grudge for that, seeing Australia has a climate more suitable for me to live in than Ireland. Dublin is a very nice little town with some lovely buildings and Phoenix park is a magnificent place.

The museum there has a wonderful stuff and I even saw some of our old South Australian stamps - it would take a week to go through it properly. The Art gallery is splendid too. I went over Guinness' Brewery - it is an immense industry. When you had had a look over the place they treat you to some of their stout, but I don't like any liquor much. Sackville street, which was knocked about a bit during the rebellion is still in ruins and the GPO is still the same.

I got back to London Thursday morning and went and saw the King's Guard change at Buckingham Palace (very smart) and then caught the train home after a most enjoyable fortnight.

The whole trip, fare and all cost me £14.0.0 and I came home with £11.0.0 in my belt as I did not intend to be short of money on my trip and I had everything I wanted and lived pretty swanky.

Well I must close now, hoping you are all well as I am.

I remain,

Your loving Son and Brother,

Tom

Thomas James Quinn

Thomas Quinn was born near the town of Mt. Bryan East, South Australia on 20th September, 1892 to parents William Henry & Annie Quinn (nee O'Mealley). Thomas was the oldest of seven children

Thomas James Quinn was a 23 year old, single, Farmer from Mt. Bryan, South Australia when he enlisted on 12th July, 1916 at Adelaide with the 11th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) He was given the rank of Private and a service number of 4245. His religion was listed as Roman Catholic. Thomas Quinn's next of kin was listed as his father – William Henry Quinn of Mt. Bryan, South Australia.

Pte Thomas James Quinn was attached to "C" Company from 12th July, 1916 until 28th August, 1916. From there he was placed with the 2nd Depot Battalion, Bomb School, "A" Company, Base Infantry, Musketry School & N.C.O.'s School.

Private Thomas James Quinn embarked from Adelaide on HMAT *Afric* (A19) on 7th November, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 9th January, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Pte Quinn was promoted to Acting Sergeant. He was marched in to 8th Training Battalion at Hurdcott, Wiltshire from Australia on 10th January, 1917.

Acting Sergeant Quinn was "On Command to Lyndhurst Bombing School from 8th Training Battalion, Hurdcott" from 12th March, 1917.

Acting Sergeant Thomas James Quinn qualified as "Instructor" in Bomb throwing at a course of instruction at the Bombing School Lyndhurst from 12th to 24th March, 1917.

Acting Sergeant Thomas James Quinn proceeded overseas to France via Folkstone on 5th April, 1917 from 8th Training Battalion, Hurdcott.

Acting Sergeant Thomas James Quinn reverted back to Private at Australian Divisional Base Depot on 7th April, 1917 at Etaples. He was taken on Strength with 32nd Battalion from 10th Reinforcements in the rank of Private.

Pte Quinn was appointed Lance/Corporal on 1st June, 1917. L/Cpl. Quinn was promoted to Temp. Cpl. on 4th October, 1917 as Cpl. Gourley had been evacuated injured.

L/Cpl. Quinn was Wounded in Action on 16th October, 1917 & relinquished his rank of Temp Cpl. on being evacuated wounded. He was transferred from 3A. F. Amb., to 10 Casualty Clearing Station between 16th & 17th October, 1917 before being admitted to 16 General Hospital at Le Treport on 18th October, 1917. L/Cpl. Quinn embarked for England with a Gunshot wound to left thigh on 10th November, 1917. He was admitted to 5th South General Hospital at Portsmouth on 12th November, 1917.

L/Cpl. Quinn was transferred to 3rd Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford on 10th December, 1918 & discharged on 7th January, 1918. He was marched in to No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott that same day.

L/Cpl. Quinn was marched in to Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverell on 28th February, 1918.

L/Cpl. Quinn proceeded overseas to France from Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverell via Southampton on 13th March, 1918. He rejoined his Unit on 19th March, 1918, after being Wounded & having convalesced in England.

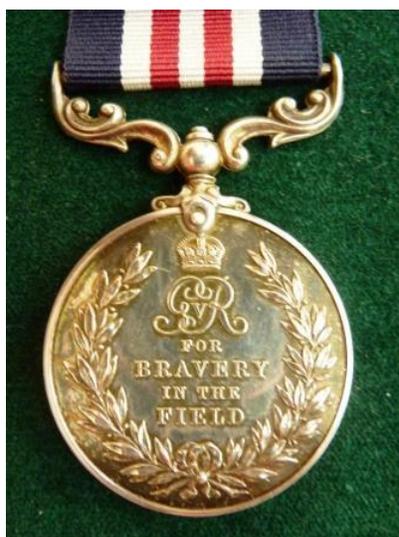
L/Cpl. Quinn was marched in from England to Havre on 14th March, 1918 & marched out to his Unit on 15th March, 1918.

L/Cpl. Quinn was promoted to Temp. Cpl. on 24th April, 1918 after Cpl. Snook was evacuated wounded on 23rd April, 1918.

Temp. Cpl. Quinn was promoted to Corporal on 2nd July, 1918 after Cpl. Pugsley was killed on 24th June, 1918.

Corporal Thomas James Quinn was awarded the Military Medal on 27th August, 1918 for "Bravery in the field".

The Military Medal was awarded to Non Commissioned Officers and men of the Army for "Acts of bravery". The Award was gazetted in London Gazette dated 11th December, 1918 & in the Australian Gazette dated 14th March, 1919.



Military Medal

Cpl. Quinn was sent to 4th Army Sniping School on 28th August, 1918 & rejoined his Unit on 15th September, 1918.

Cpl. Quinn proceeded on English Leave on 22nd December, 1918 & rejoined his Unit on 6th January, 1919.

From 21st January, 1919 to 4th February, 1919 Cpl. Quinn was on Leave from France. He was sent sick to Military Hospital while on Leave in Glasgow on 1st February, 1919 & discharged on 8th February, 1919 where he was admitted to Dartford.

Cpl. Quinn was marched in from 3rd Auxilliary Hospital to Weymouth on 28th March, 1919.

Corporal Thomas James Quinn returned to Australia via *Medic* on 10th April, 1919 & disembarked 27th May 1919.

Corporal Thomas James Quinn was discharged on 4th July, 1919 due to "Cessation of Hostilities". He had served for 2 years 358 days - with 2 years & 202 of those days served abroad.

Corporal Thomas James Quinn was also entitled to British War & Victory Medal.

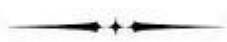
Corporal T. J. Quinn is named on the Mount Bryan Honour Board located inside the Mount Bryan Soldiers Memorial Hall. (3rd Column, 6th name from bottom)



Mount Bryan Roll of Honour 1914 – 1918

(Photo from SA & NT War Memorials – Karen Paich 2001)

(25 pages of Pte Thomas James Quinn's Service Record file are available for viewing at the National Archives website.)





Corporal Thomas James Quinn

Thomas James Quinn married Harriet Smith on 12th February, 1923 in the district of Frome, South Australia.



Thomas & Harriet Quinn

Thomas James Quinn died on 9th April, 1975 at Burra, South Australia & was buried on 11th April, 1975 in Burra Cemetery, South Australia – Plot A 31.

Harriett Quinn, wife of Thomas James Quinn, died in January, 1979 & was buried on 8th January, 1979 in Burra Cemetery also – Plot A 32.



Burra Cemetery



(Photo courtesy of Kym at [Dead Search](#))