

GEORGE FREDERICK QUINN

George Quinn was born on the 10 November 1903 in Dublin. He loved life and lived every day of his thirty-eight years to the fullest. One of his sayings was '*here today, gone tomorrow*'.

George, his wife, sons John and Don, and daughter Judith lived the typical suburban lifestyle. George liked nothing better when he was home on leave than to organise a big neighbourhood cricket match. The neighbourhood loved them, and George encouraged his sons to participate in the game he loved so much.

George joined the Navy in 1926, not long after arriving in Australia from Ireland. He served in many ships and was on *HMAS Brisbane* when she was decommissioned in England. Her crew, including George was transferred to

the new *HMAS Sydney* under Captain Fitzgerald. Later he returned back to serve on *Sydney* under Captain Collins and served in the Mediterranean.

Like Alan Cunnington, George was not present when his daughter Judith was born, and she was walking by the time he got to meet her for the first time. He was a good father. One night he was reading Judith a story about frogs, and Judith wanted to see one. George slipped over the back fence with a bucket, and much to his wife's disgust, came back and deposited several little green frogs into the bath. When Judith got tired of playing with them, he returned them to the creek.

As well as being a good father to his kids, George was a 'bit of a lad' who liked a beer and a bet on the horses. His action station was X turret, and when Judith, as a six year old, and her mother visited the ship, Captain Collins gave Judith a personal tour, and sat her on the seat behind the big guns. She was frightened she would blow up Sydney Harbour Bridge. For a further insight into George is this letter to his son.

Petty Officers Mess

HMAS Sydney

C/o GPO

25 June 1940

My dear son,

I received your ever-welcome letter and was very pleased to learn you were all keeping well on that date. I am glad you enjoyed yourself on Empire night with the bon fires etc. It is for that beautiful Freedom,

which you are enjoying that the Empire is fighting for and we are going to win and continue with that freedom.

Yes son you do make me feel homesick when you mention going out in the car ect. I want you to keep enjoying yourself to the full, I was about your age during the last war and can fully realise your feelings, I don't want you to get down in the dumps because the Germans are having successes in France. We have a huge Navy that commands the Seas, we have a very brave Air Force, we have a dominated will to see this war to the finish and we will come out on top.

Well son I fully expect to be in the Mediterranean Sea for some considerable time and I want you to take my place with Mum, work hard for her, keep up her spirits, or as we used to say during the last war – keep the home fires burning till the boys come home. I want you to write to me as often as you can, don't relax in your schooling and home studies.

No doubt you have heard over the wireless of the Italian air raids in the different parts of the Mediterranean Sea, thank God Australia is free from them, so loose no sleep over them. You are too remote out there. Now the football season is in full swing you want to play as much as you can, also Don. It is a good game and the exercise is nourishment for the mind. How is Don getting on at school? I hope he is playing the game and not up to any monkey tricks?

How is uncle getting along, I hope his leg is not causing any trouble.

Give him my best, also Dave, Jean and Auntie Kit. Well son I am lost

*for something to write about, I will conclude now son with best love to
Mum, Don, Judy and yourself.*

Your loving father

George Quinn.

George Quinn was originally hoping to get leave from *Sydney* so he could be home for his daughter's birthday on 31 October. His ulcers were playing up, but he changed his plans because *Sydney* was short of a few items, and he decided to get all of that in order first. He had been offered the Cook's position at Mascot airport, and may have decided that when *HMAS Sydney* returned to Sydney for Christmas and a refit, he could be discharged after fifteen years of service to the Navy.

Judith's family, like all the others, received news of the loss of her father's ship on 26 November 1941. Some families received advice that the date of death had been amended from 19 November 1941 to the 20 November 1941 with an apology for the original advice.^v No valid explanation has been given for this change and apology. Mrs Eva Quinn always believed her husband died on the 20 November because that night he 'visited her'. She saw him at the window and went to open the front door to let him in, but he had vanished.