

Robert Sabey COLBEY  
Service number PA 1900  
Date of birth 18 November 1916  
Place of birth Blanchetown  
Place of enlistment Port Adelaide  
Date of enlistment 30 September 1940  
Date of death 19 November 1941

Robert Sabey COLBEY was born on 18 November 1916 at Blanchetown, to Reginald John George and Agnes Mary COLBEY. He was named after his maternal grandfather, Robert SABEY.

Robert was the 7<sup>th</sup> child, and the 6<sup>th</sup> son of Reginald and Agnes COLBEY. When he was born, his brothers were Reginald 8, Alan 7, Stair 6, Geoff 4, Keith 3 and his sister Jean was 5. There were 2 more sons born after Robert, Warwick b. 1918 and Dick b. 1924 (who only lived for 3 hours).

Robert Sabey COLBEY was born at Blanchetown where his father was the policeman. When Robert was 3½ in 1920, the family moved to Port Wakefield and he lived there in the police station house until he was 7½ when the family was transferred to Eudunda in 1924.

The family was posted to Hamley Bridge in 1929 when Robert was almost 13 and then to Gumeracha in 1934 where Robert's father was the sergeant in charge of the police station and court house. Thus, Robert was 16 when the family arrived in Gumeracha.

Robert was not still living at home with his family in Gumeracha in 1934, but was living at Tailem Bend with his maternal grandparents, Robert and Jean SABEY. One of his older brothers, Geoff was also living there and milking cows at Jervois for his grandparents.

Robert, or Bob as he was known, worked at Jervois for 6/7 years before enlistment. He was also employed as a jockey at Tailem Bend until he became too tall (5'3½") and too heavy to continue riding. While at Tailem Bend, he played football for Jervois and was a member of their 1934 Premiership team. He was made a life member of the Jervois Football Club in 1948 and his name is on the Jervois Memorial Gates with others who lost their lives in war fighting for Australia.

Horses were Robert's great passion in life and he was a fine horseman. At one country race meeting, Robert "rode the card" and became a great amateur jockey. "He rode with success at the Murray Bridge Hunt Club race meetings and also at Jervois sporting events, where he was a conspicuous figure". His most prestigious win was at the Gawler Race Course on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1938 when he won the S.A. Hunter's Steeplechase on "Prince Dignity" which was owned by Dr A C Savage (of Gumeracha). The S.A. Hunter's Steeplechase was considered the top amateur race in the state at that time and Robert's trophy for the winning ride was a commemorative whip and silver rose bowl.

When World War 2 was declared in 1939, all 7 of the Colbey boys volunteered, 5 of them joining the Army (1 was refused enlistment as he was based at Tarcoola with the railways and was deemed to have a reserved occupation) and Robert, through the contacts of Dr Savage, joined the navy. He was the only son his mother did not worry about as she believed very few members of the Australian Navy were killed in action.

Robert served in the following Ships and depots, HMAS Torrens, Cerberus, Kattabul and lastly HMAS Sydney. Initially he was on small coastal defence ships around the Western Australian coast but then was delighted to be transferred in September 1941 to the "Sydney". Robert Sabey COLBEY was on his maiden voyage on the Sydney when she was attacked and sunk off the Western Australia coast on 19 November 1941. He was 25 years and 1 day old when he died.

The last letter his mother Agnes Colbey wrote to him from Gumeracha was returned to her and has been offered to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Robert had two nephews named after him, Robert Hack b 1939 a son of his sister Jean, and Robert Colbey who currently lives in Alice Springs, son of his oldest brother, Reginald Colbey.

Robert is remembered and honoured by all his family today at the Gumeracha RSL Dawn Service.

25th April, 2008