

8a Wenn court
Bunbury 6230
December 10th 2009

To the
Virtual Memorial Committee

Dear Sir,

Re: *Sydney* serviceman Alex Doxey

When I was 14, my cousin from Western Australia, Alex Doxey, spent many weekends with my family in Melbourne when he was training on *Cerberus* and we occasionally corresponded afterwards. I recently found a letter from him describing the action when the *Sydney* sank the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* and am delighted to offer a copy of it for publication on the Virtual Website.

I understand that when the ship returned to Australia, Alex attended a Gunnery course in Sydney and then rejoined the ship, coming back to Melbourne early in November 1941. He invited me to meet him on the ship I think, on a Saturday to go over her with him and still remember my great disappointment then that I was ill that day. I never saw him again.

For your interest, I married one of those West Australian relations who was also training in Victoria and later served on the *Quickmatch*. We married in Melbourne in 1946 and I then came to live in Bunbury, Western Australia.

Yours Sincerely



Phyllis Barnes

The Same Address

26/11/40

Dear Phyllis,

I received your most welcome letter a few days ago. Coming by ordinary mail it (~~came~~) took about 6 weeks to get to me.

I am in the same boat as yourself, I have a lot of studies to do as I am preparing for another exam, the third in two months. I hope to come out well in this 3rd exam. In the first I was top of the class with 92%. In the second I was top of the class with 89%. And in the third !!? But I hope to get top again.

I hope you had a good time at the church fair.

Sorry you were disappointed about my last letter about the 'Colleoni' action. I don't think I could do as good a job as the newspapers did, but heres my view.

About 7.30 a.m on the morning of the 19th of July 1940 a wireless message to the Sydney from one of the destroyers stated that two "6" Italian Cruisers had we sighted one [p2] that they, the destroyers, were proceeding to investigate. The destroyers got in close, only to find that the cruisers were the fastest in the world, the Bartolomeo Colleoni of 40 knots (about 45 miles an hour).

The destroyers reported this fact by wireless and turned and steamed back towards the Sydney at 34 knots. Even at that speed these cruisers were overhauling the destroyers fast and just when the destroyers were thinking that they were doomed and couldn't get away, over the horizon came the "Sydney" and another destroyer. At XXX yards the Sydney opened fire and their second salvo hit the other Italian Cruiser. After about 4 salvos the Sydney shifted her target to the Bart. Colleoni hitting her right from the first salvo.

For about 10 minutes, the 2 Italian Cruisers came towards us then they turned to flee. As she turned the Colleoni showed the full length of her side and the Sydney put a full broadside (8 shells) straight into her magazines which stopped her. The other cruiser was getting away fast behind a smoke screen so we kept our fire concentrated [p3] on the B. C.

When we came abreast of her at about XXX yards away she started firing anew and at twenty past nine one shell went through our foremost funnel but did nothing to stop the workings of our ship.

At 9.30 we stopped firing at the B.C. and chased the second one but her superior speed allowed her to escape.

When we got back to harbour all the men on the other ships lined the decks and gave us three rousing cheers. All the tugs & boats in the harbour blew their sirens and their horns and everyone was happy.

Well I hope that suits you. Let me know if it doesn't. I can't tell you much about the ports of call before our present station because I didn't see much of any of them except Colombo.

We reached Singapore in the evening and so didn't see much of that. The harbour is like a canal. You enter harbour one end and you leave it by going straight through [p4] and out the other end.

On your right as you enter the harbour is the European Area with big buildings and good roads. While on your left built in to the water of the harbour, on stilts are the

native quarters, very dirty and with a ----- smell hovering over it. The population is mainly Chinese. We were their only long enough to oil then we sailed at midnight.

Three days later we entered Colombo harbour. I met a Native Policeman who could speak, read and write almost perfect English and he took me out to his home, and the home of his relations in the native quarters.

The native quarters of Colombo are very dirty and the smells are terrible but after a while your nose gets used to the smells. The houses are very clean inside and the people seem to take great pains to keep them clean. The people always try to make a britisher in uniform very welcome.

The city of Colombo is not very big ~~no~~ nor is it particularly clean, but the people always give you a good time.

I think I am making this letter too (p5) long and it might be overweight so will cut it short and give you the rest in the next letter.

Mum was right, it was dirt on my face. I was scraping burnt paint of the guns and the wind was blowing it back in my face.

I hope Wendy has got over the infection to her feet and that it hasn't made any scars. Give her my love.

I hope you come out of your exams on the very top. I wish you every luck.

Yes, I like the ship but it is impossible to say when I will leave it. I may have to go tomorrow for all I know.

Your letter was not censored, 'cos it came by "Sea Route" mail, but if it had come by Air Mail it would have been. I can't possibly say when we will leave here or where we will go.

Well the mail closes in 50 mins time so I will have to sign off as

Your affectionate Cousin

Alex

[On the back of last page]

P.S. Yes I did receive your mother's letter

[Note – XXX denotes a section of paper cut out by censor]

PAR AVION



Miss P. White
16 Gregory Grove
East Preston
N.18
Victoria
Australia

[Inside flap]

A. Doxey
19 Mess

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