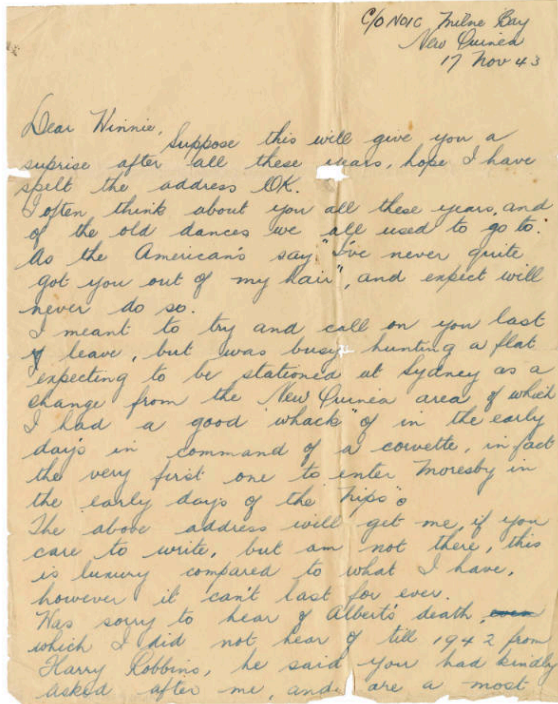


Basic Detail Report



ANMS1472[016]

Title

Letter to Win dated 17 Nov 43

Date

17 November 1943

Medium

Paper

Dimensions

Overall: 257 x 201 mm

Name

Letter

History

According to family history information, Dudley Charles Northam was born in Torquay, UK in 1902. The family

came to Australia in the early 1900s and settled in Roseville, Sydney. The family had a strong maritime heritage - Dudley's brother William (Bill) after whom Northam Park near George Street, Sydney is named, won an olympic medal in yachting. At the age of 15, Dudley's father, without consulting him, signed him on as an apprentice on the four masted, square rigged Scottish registered wool and wheat vessel, MOUNT STEWART. A fellow apprentice was Clive Henderson who was later the master of the Sydney pilot vessel CAPTAIN COOK. Northam gained his Master's ticket after four years in sail and became a member of the ship's company on vessels of the Union Steamship Co. one of which was the WONGANELLA which was on the Australia-NZ run at the time. He left the sea for some years during which he ran an ice works in North Sydney; a business willed him by his father. During the 1930s Northam had become a officer in the naval reserve and when war broke out in 1939 he was called for service on a minesweeper. Later, he was given his own command of the newly commissioned corvette, the HMAS COOLAC. The rigours of minesweeping in Bass Strait brought on pleurisy and tuberculosis and Northam spent some time recovering his health. After a period at Bodington and then Flinders Naval Depot he was appointed Executive Officer on the WESTRALIA, an Armed Merchant Cruiser then working in the Pacific. Previously, in December 1941, the WESTRALIA was involved in the largest example of mutiny in the history of the Australian navy with 104 men arrested and charged. In 1943 the vessel was converted to a Landing Ship Infantry and then from 1946-1951 a Troop Transport. From material in the collection it appears Northam also served on HMAS DOOMBA and HMAS WARREGO for periods. Northam rose to the rank of Lieutenant Commander, also called a 'two and a half striper' in the RANR or 'Wavy Navy', the naval reserve. He was awarded a Mention in Despatches and retired from the Navy at war's end. Northam remained a Reserve officer - though shore based due to his ongoing lung problems. The Argus 21 November 1945: MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES Four

RAN officers who have served as port directors in New Guinea areas, and Commander Little, who was in charge of the hydrographic work which followed the assault on Balikpapan. have been mentioned in despatches. They are: Lieut - Commander Dudley Charles NORTHAM. RD, RANR (s) (formerly port director of Langemak), of Gordon, Sydney. Acting Lieut-Commander Eric John BARRON, RANR (S) (formerly port director at Lae), of East Fremantle. Acting Lieut-Commander Norman Miller GORDON, RANR (S) (formerly port director at Buna), of Cairns, Queens- land. Commander Frederick Keith BAXTER, RD, RANR (S) (formerly port director at Hollandia), of Williamstown, Victoria. Acting Commander Colin Goyder LITTLE, DSC. RAN (HMAS Warrego), Of Sydney.