



FROM THE COLLEGE CHAPLAIN

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.' Joshua 1:9

The Official Opening of the 'Rawdon Middleton VC Sports Complex' recently was a very special occasion, in honour of a great Australian.

But who was Rawdon Middleton?

Middleton was the great-nephew of the explorer, Hamilton Hume, he was born in Sydney and grew up in Western NSW playing a lot of sport including cricket and tennis. However, it was his incredible strength and courage shown in WWII that earned the highest military award for gallantry - the Victoria Cross.

The incident that earned him the VC happened on 28 November 1942.

Middleton and his crew took off on their 29th mission, toward Italy, but the aircraft was struck by artillery. One shell exploded in the cockpit wounding Middleton in the face and destroying his right eye. The same shell also wounded the second pilot and wireless operator. Middleton lost consciousness and the aircraft dived to just 800 feet before the second pilot brought it under control. They were hit by more artillery as they tried to escape the target.

When Middleton regained consciousness he began the flight back over the Alps towards England, knowing that his damaged aircraft did not have enough fuel to complete the journey. The crew discussed the possibility of abandoning the aircraft or trying to land in northern France but Middleton decided to head for England where his crew would have the chance to bail out.

As they approached the French coast the plane was again hit again but flew on. Now over the English coast with only five minutes of fuel left, Middleton ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft. Five men left the stricken plane, and two remained on board to help Middleton before attempting to parachute to safety.

To avoid the possibility of losing civilian lives Middleton crashed the plane into the sea. Tragically, Middleton did not survive.



Hopefully, we will never have to face such a predicament in our lives. But our lives can be overwhelming and the Bible encourages us to be **strong** and **courageous**.

The words from the verse are emblazoned on the new sports complex as a reminder not only of Middleton's strength and courage, but for for all of us. These words come from Joshua 1:9.

Life is overwhelming at times. But as children of God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, our strength and courage comes not from our own resources, but from our creator God, who is always present.

Rev Stuart Tye
Chaplain