



THE WAY



MORE NEWS FROM THE BUILDING OPENING

For those who didn't attend on the day we thought you would like to read the Governor of NSW, His Excellency General, The Honourable David Hurley's speech

"I would also like to pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we gather, the Gandangara (Pron: Gan-DAN-ga-RA) people. This acknowledgement is even more important at this time as Australia has begun to properly acknowledge the service of our Aboriginal people in WW1 and in subsequent years.

I am honoured to be here for this special day in the life of this College. I am fortunate to have visited this school, named after The Reverend Thomas Hassall, one of the great pioneers of education in New South Wales, once before, back in 2015, when I delivered the Anzac Address.

So Linda and I are very pleased to be back here today for the opening of this new sports facility and oval, fittingly named the Rawdon Middleton VC Sports Complex.

Rawdon Hume Middleton (always called Rawdon by his family and friends but generally known as Ron in the Air Force) was born at Waverley, New South Wales in July 1916, the great nephew of the early Australia explorer Hamilton Hume and a relative of Thomas Hassall, after whom this school is named, through marriage on his grandmother's side. Educated at Gilgandra and at Dubbo High School, he was a keen sportsman, later working as a jackeroo on Leewong, a station at Yarrabandi, near Parkes, managed by his father, when World War II broke out.

He enlisted in the RAAF in October 1940, an early beneficiary of the Empire Air Training Scheme, learning to fly at Narromine. He was posted as a Sergeant pilot to an operational unit, Squadron RAF, flying Short Stirling bombers. He gained more experience as a second pilot and soon became

Captain of his own crew. He was promoted to Flight Sergeant in October 1942.

On the night of 28-29 November 1942 when flying Stirling GF372, Middleton's aircraft was on a mission to bomb heavy industry plants in Italy when he was hit by enemy fire. Even though he was severely wounded with a damaged aircraft and fuel tank he continued flying for hours across the Alps to reach the English coast to save his crew. When reaching close to the coastline he ordered his crew to parachute to safety. Five crew members parachuted out. Two stayed with him. Middleton then turned the plane towards the English Channel to avoid crashing into land and risking civilian lives. He was killed in action along with two crew members who bailed at the last minute and drowned. Rawdon himself went down with his aircraft.

Middleton's bravery was recorded in the English press and earned him the admiration of the British public. When the story was reported there were calls for him to be awarded a VC. In the citation it said "While all the crew displayed great heroism of high order, the urge to do so came from Flt Sgt Middleton whose fortitude and strength of will made possible the completion of the mission. His devotion to duty in the face of overwhelming odds is unsurpassed in the annals of the Royal Air Force."

His body washed ashore at Shakespeare Beach, Dover on 1 February 1943 and he was buried in the churchyard of St. John's, Beck's Row, Suffolk, with full military honours. Rawdon Middleton had become the first member of the RAAF to be honoured by the award of a Victoria Cross. His father was reported to have said of him that: 'My son did his duty.'

What does Rawdon's life story tell us? What does it tell us about service?

The often-repeated four words used to describe the spirit of ANZAC are Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice. They can be found inscribed on pillars at our war memorial in the Kokoda village in Papua New Guinea. While these words resonate, their abstract nature makes these qualities hard to grasp.

I would like to pass on to our young men and women, here at this College, my interpretation of the Spirit of ANZAC which I offered in my address at the ANZAC Day Dawn Service in 2015:

- When you give us a job to do we will give it our best shot, whether that results in failure or success;*
- When we do the job you have asked of us, then we will do it in a manner of which you will be proud; and*
- While we are doing the job we will look after our mates, and especially look after them, and their families if necessary, when the job is done.*

As much as Rawdon's commitment to his duty as pilot in this war was full and fearless, no less was Rawdon's commitment to his mates and his colleagues, his fellow crew, five of whom would undoubtedly had lost their lives if not for Rawdon's actions.

It is wonderful that this Complex should be opened in the presence of a number of representatives of the Middleton, Hume and Hassall families today.

It is with great pride that we gather to honour a great Australian, in the opening and naming of this new sports complex, the Rawdon Middleton VC Sports Complex."

You can read more about the day by following the link to a story recently featured in the Liverpool Champion

<http://www.liverpoolchampion.com.au/story/5606614/nsw-governor-opens-private-schools-new-sports-building/?cs=1465>

