

Koo Wee Rup, where Don's family had their dairy farm, is a regional Victorian town approximately 65km south-east of Melbourne city.

Wilson Hall is the ceremonial hall of Melbourne University. The original Hall, in which Don sat his Public Service exams, was destroyed by fire in 1952. See an article about the fire at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/18256075>.

Mount Martha, the site of Don's Army training camp, is a small suburb of Melbourne, on Port Philip Bay, some 60km south-east of the city. It is about 50km west of Koo Wee Rup. **Broadmeadows**, from whence came the WWI-era tents in which Don and his fellow recruits stayed, is a northern suburb of Melbourne and has hosted an Army camp since the early days of WWI.

1 Initial Training School was at **Somers**, also not far from Koo Wee Rup, on the shores of Western Port.

7 Elementary Flying Training School was at **Western Junction**, near Launceston in northern Tasmania. The airfield remains active as Launceston Airport.

1 Service Flying Training School was at Point Cook, 25km south-west of Melbourne. It was Australia's first Air Force base and it remains the oldest continually-operating military airfield in the world. Though no flying units are now based there it hosts the RAAF Museum (see <http://www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/index.htm>).

The **Showgrounds** are located at Flemington, an inner-western suburb of Melbourne. They are adjacent to **Flemington Racecourse**, the home of the **Melbourne Cup** horse race, which Don mentions towards the end of the interview.

Camp Myles Standish was a US Army staging camp near Taunton in Massachusetts. Most Australian airmen who travelled across the US on their way to war would have been among about a million soldiers, sailors and airmen who went through the camp.

The railway lines that Don mentions following while training from Point Cook went to **Ballarat** and **Seymour**.

Don's first gunner was named **Chas Mears**. His mid-upper gunner was **Johnny Cowell**.

Don completed HCU at **Rufforth**. 578 Squadron was at **Burn**.

AFL, or Australian Football League, also known as 'Aussie Rules', is a football game popular in the southern states of Australia. It is played on an oval ground and is characterised by long kicks, spectacular 'marks' (catches) and four upright goal posts. **Rugby** in this case refers to rugby league, the opposing code which is popular in New South Wales and Queensland.

Don's first grocery stores were at Fawkner, a northern suburb of Melbourne, and Hampton, which is on Port Philip Bay some 15km south-east of the city.

The '**Birdcage**' is a particularly exclusive marquee at the Melbourne Cup horse racing carnival.

The actual population of Ballarat is about 96,000, and of Colac (another regional town) about 11,500.

Scans:

Don was unable to find his logbook at the time of the interview; he thinks a grandchild has it. If he finds it he will let me know for scanning.

The only photographs that Don has of his wartime service are framed on his wall; they are under glass and so cannot be scanned. However there is a crew photograph available through the Australian War Memorial; see <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P03759.001>.

Air Vice Marshal Henry Neilson Wrigley was the Air Officer commanding RAAF Overseas Headquarters in London from 1942 until he retired in June 1946. It was in this capacity that he signed the letter sent to Don on the award of his DFC in November 1944.

The Programme series of scans relates to a particular leave that Don and a mate enjoyed in London in March 1944. Unfortunately, he only remembered to tell me the story when we were scanning the documents so it was not recorded, but a description follows, which I wrote up from my post-interview notes shortly after arriving home:

"The thing to do when you went to London", Don said, "was to organise accommodation as soon as you arrived in the city", because of high demand. Unfortunately, on this occasion Don and his mate found themselves in a pub for some beers, which became another pub for more beers, and another, and another. When they were booted out at about 11pm - closing time - from the final pub (pubs had staggered hours in London during wartime), Don asked his mate where he was staying. He replied, dunno, what about you? Don hadn't organised anything either. The Boomerang Club was not an option at that hour, either were the other services clubs in the city, but the Strand Palace could perhaps take them, they thought. (One of the more exclusive hotels in London, the Strand Palace would well and truly have exceeded the budget abilities of the average Flight Sergeant, as both were at the time). So they went there, to be confronted by a large queue of American GIs in front of the booking desk.

Here was one occasion where the distinctly blue Australian uniform came in handy. The concierge came up to them, past the Yanks, and enquired quietly whether they had a reservation. They replied, no, we don't. He nodded. "Come with me." The concierge led them to the desk, and asked the receptionist in a loud voice, "Which is Mr McDonald's room?", holding out his hand for a key, which he then gave to Don and his mate. "If those Americans had known that we didn't have a reservation either and we'd jumped the queue like that...." he said to me with a shudder.

In any case, in for a penny, in for a pound, they thought. The following day they were talking at breakfast to a woman who asked if they had anything planned for the afternoon. They replied no, thinking about how little funds they had left following their extravagant accommodation. She said that she would be pleased to provide them with tickets for a show.

In Royal Albert Hall.

In the Royal Box.

And there would be special people in the audience.

Given strict instructions not to speak to royalty, should any be present, unless first spoken to, Don and his mate went to Royal Albert Hall for what turned out to be "A Grand Concert as a Tribute to Sir Henry J. Wood", and sat in the second row of the Royal Box. Shortly before the performance began there was a great cheer from the crowd (Don's mate leant over and said, "Do you reckon they're cheering for us, Mac?"), and into the Royal Box swept the Queen and the two Princesses, Margaret and Elizabeth (who of course is now the current Queen). The royal party sat in the row of seats directly in front of Don and his mate and they did indeed have a short conversation with them.

This being a particularly memorable leave, Don decided a souvenir would be required from the hotel. They debated about pinching a towel (replacing it with their ratty, grey Air Force-issue towels) but decided it wouldn't last very long, so something more permanent was more appropriate. They settled on a small crystal glass. Somehow it survived the next year or so of travelling around in Don's kitbag and came home with him.

As Don was telling this story he went to a cabinet and returned with the crystal glass. It is in Don's hand in one of the photographs I took following our interview.