

DONALD ERNEST CAMERON CHARLWOOD

Don Charlwood was born in the Victoria area of Melbourne in Australia, on the 6th of September, 1915. He was to become a very famous writer and served in the R.A.A.F. during the Second World War.

He joined the R.A.A.F. in May 1941 and began basic training as a navigator and bomb aimer, at Number 1 Initial Training School, at Somers in Victoria. He then went on to Sydney. From there, he moved to Canada to continue his training. In Canada, he met his future wife, Nell East, who was a primary school teacher.

He then travelled to Britain and was posted to Number 3 Advanced Flying Unit at Bobbington Airfield near Wolverhampton. He was by now a well-trained navigator and bomb aimer, but needed to learn how to fly as part of a bomber crew. He was therefore sent to 27 Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Lichfield. He flew mainly out of Tatenhill, which was just a few miles away from the main runway at Lichfield.

Here, he met Geoff Maddern a pilot, who he was to fly with for the rest of the war. They trained in Wellington Bombers and their last training flight was on the 5th of September, 1943.

From here, they were sent to Number 103 Squadron R.A.F. Elsham Wolds in Lincolnshire, which was an Operational Unit. This meant that they were now facing the enemy on bombing missions in Belgium, France and Germany. They had to complete 30 missions, which was very dangerous. Not many crews survived.

They were now flying Avro Lancasters and were very skilful and experienced. They managed to successfully complete their 30 missions without any problems. At this time, no other crew at Elsham Wolds had managed to do this for a long time. Many crews had been killed.

Don was then sent back to Lichfield where he became an instructor. His job was to use his experiences to help to train other bomber crews.

Thankfully, Don managed to survive the war and returned safely back to Australia in 1945. He stopped off in Canada on his way back home, to marry his girlfriend Nell and took her back to Australia with him.

When he returned back home, he quickly settled down to married life and he and his wife Nell had four children.

Don worked as an Air Traffic Controller and also in training and recruitment. He became a famous writer something that he had always wanted to do. Many of his books were stories and were so good that they were studied in Australian schools. Some books were also about his experiences in the war. Two of his books "No Moon Tonight "and "Journey into The Night "tell us a lot about what he went through. He mentions a lot about R.A.F. Lichfield. These two books are thought by many people to be amongst the best books written about flying as part of a bomber crew, during the Second World War.

In 1975, he was made a member of the Order of Australia as a reward for his writing. He also joined the R.A.F. Lichfield Association set up by Derek and Angela Smith, to keep in touch with people who had served at R.A.F. Lichfield during the war. He came back to Lichfield many times, in order to attend reunions organised by the Association.

Sadly, he died on the 20th of June 2012, at the age of 96.