

= John Francis Jackson =

John Francis Jackson , DFC (23 February 1908 ? 28 April 1942) was an Australian fighter ace and squadron commander of World War II . He was credited with eight aerial victories , and led No. 75 Squadron during the Battle of Port Moresby in 1942 . Born in Brisbane , he was a grazier and businessman , who also operated his own private plane , when he joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Reserve in 1936 . Called up for active service following the outbreak of war in 1939 , Jackson served with No. 23 Squadron in Australia before he was posted to the Middle East in November 1940 . As a fighter pilot with No. 3 Squadron he flew Gloster Gladiators , Hawker Hurricanes and P @-@ 40 Tomahawks during the North African and Syria ? Lebanon campaigns .

Jackson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Mentioned in Despatches for his actions in the Middle East . Subsequently posted to the South West Pacific theatre , he was promoted to squadron leader in March 1942 and given command of No. 75 Squadron at Port Moresby in Papua , operating P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks . Described as " rugged , simple " and " true as steel " , Jackson was nicknamed " Old John " in affectionate tribute to his thirty @-@ four years . He earned praise for his leadership during the defence of Port Moresby before his death in combat on 28 April . His younger brother Les took over No. 75 Squadron , and also became a fighter ace . Jacksons International Airport , Port Moresby , is named in John Jackson 's honour .

= = Early career = =

John Jackson was born on 23 February 1908 in the Brisbane suburb of New Farm , Queensland , the eldest son of businessman William Jackson and his wife Edith . Educated at Brisbane Grammar School and The Scots College , Warwick , Jackson joined the Young Australia League , with which he visited Europe . After leaving school he ran a grazing property in St George . By the early 1930s , he was in business as a stock and station agent , and had interests in engineering and financial concerns . He was inspired by the 1934 London to Melbourne Air Race to take up flying , and purchased a Klemm Swallow monoplane . In 1936 , he took part in the South Australian centenary air race , flying from Brisbane to Adelaide . That August , he joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Reserve , or Citizen Air Force . In 1937 , he upgraded his aircraft to a Beechcraft Staggywing , a type that was faster than many in the RAAF 's inventory .

On 17 February 1938 , Jackson married Elisabeth Thompson at Christ Church , North Adelaide ; the couple had a son and a daughter . Following the outbreak of World War II , Jackson was called up for active duty and commissioned as a pilot officer in the RAAF on 2 October 1939 . His twenty @-@ year @-@ old brother Arthur , also a pilot and keen to join the Air Force , was killed in a flying accident later that month . Two other brothers , Edward and Leslie , joined the RAAF in November . John Jackson served initially with No. 23 Squadron , which operated CAC Wirraways at Archerfield , Queensland . He was promoted to flying officer in April 1940 . That October , he was posted to join No. 3 (Army Cooperation) Squadron , which had been based in Egypt since August . He arrived in the Middle East in November 1940 .

= = Combat service = =

= = = Middle East = = =

Jackson first saw action with No. 3 Squadron in the North African campaign at the controls of a Gloster Gladiator . Soon after he arrived , he had an accident taking off that finished with the biplane on its nose . Though he considered himself a " full @-@ blown operational pilot " , his experience in air @-@ to @-@ air gunnery was " practically nil " , and he essentially learned the skills of being a fighter pilot as he went along . Once the unit had converted to Hawker Hurricanes , he began to score victories in quick succession . He shot down three Junkers Ju 87s in a single sortie near Mersa Matruh on 18 February 1941 , the same action in which Gordon Steege claimed three .

On 5 April 1941 , Jackson fired several bursts at a Ju 87 before his guns jammed ; he then made two dummy attacks and forced the German plane to crash land in a wadi , thus claiming his fourth victory . After converting to P @-@ 40 Tomahawks , No. 3 Squadron took part in the Syria ? Lebanon campaign . Jackson became an ace on 25 June , when he destroyed a Potez 630 light bomber (possibly a misidentified LeO 451) of the Vichy French air force . He claimed a Dewoitine D.520 fighter on 10 July . The next day Jackson shared in the destruction of another D.520 with Bobby Gibbes ; the pair tossed a coin to take full credit for it ; Gibbes won to claim his first " kill " .

Jackson was promoted to flight lieutenant on 1 July 1941 . By now his younger brother Ed had been posted to No. 3 Squadron and was serving with him in Palestine . With the campaign in Syria concluding in mid @-@ July , the unit undertook no operations in August and personnel went on leave before returning to action in Egypt the next month . The rural @-@ bred Jackson took to the night life in Alexandria , but his stay at a first @-@ class hotel left him bewildered as to the purpose of the room 's bidet , which he eventually determined was " some feminine arrangement " . Peter Ewer , in *Storm Over Kokoda* , observed : " There was something of the patrician about John Jackson , but his well @-@ to @-@ do background had a distinctly Australian tinge to it . He liked a game of cards , with a bet on the outcome . " In *Whispering Death* , Mark Johnston noted that although " tall and blue @-@ eyed " , he " did not have the air of a ' boy 's own ' or movie star pilot " , but rather was " balding , ambling and no extrovert " . Jackson returned to Australia in November 1941 . He was mentioned in despatches , and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his " marked keenness and determination " during operations with No. 3 Squadron in the Middle East . The former award was promulgated in the London Gazette on 1 January 1942 and the latter , which listed him as " John Henry Jackson " , on 7 April . The DFC was presented to Jackson 's widow Elisabeth , after his death .

= = = South West Pacific = = =

Following his return from the Middle East , Jackson was briefly an instructor at No. 1 Service Flying Training School , based at RAAF Station Point Cook , Victoria . He wrote to his wife , " I just loathe this joint . This training is a tough job and I take my hat off to the boys who have been doing it since war broke out ... every one of these instructors is longing to be sent overseas , but I doubt if they have any chance of ever getting there ? they are so valuable here . " In January 1942 , he was posted to No. 4 Squadron , which operated Wirraways in Canberra .

As the Japanese advanced towards New Guinea in early 1942 , the RAAF urgently established three new fighter units for Australia 's northern defence , Nos. 75 , 76 and 77 Squadrons . Jackson was promoted to acting squadron leader and appointed commanding officer (CO) of No. 75 Squadron on 19 March , barely two weeks after the unit was formed at Townsville , Queensland . He took over from Wing Commander Peter Jeffrey , who had led No. 3 Squadron in the Middle East and been given the task of preparing No. 75 for operations at Port Moresby , where the local Australian Army garrison was under regular attack by Japanese bombers . Jeffrey later recalled chiding Jackson for his eagerness to return to combat despite having already done enough in the war , to which the latter replied , " What are you fighting for ? King and country ? Well , I 'm fighting for my wife and kids and no Jap bastard 's going to get them ! " On 21 March , Jackson led the squadron 's main force to Seven Mile Aerodrome to take part in the defence of Port Moresby , a crucial early battle in the New Guinea campaign , and what military aviation historian Andrew Thomas called " one of the most gallant episodes in the history of the RAAF " . The unit was equipped with P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks , whose long @-@ awaited arrival had seen them irreverently dubbed " Tomorrowhawks " , " Neverhawks " , and " Mythhawks " by the beleaguered garrison at Moresby . Jackson 's age of thirty @-@ four was considered advanced for a fighter pilot , and he was affectionately known as " Old John " to his men , one of whom was his younger brother Les , now a flight lieutenant . As CO , Jackson 's leadership was to prove inspirational to his pilots , many of whom had received only nine days of training in fighter tactics , and fired their guns just once .

On 22 March , the day after he arrived in New Guinea , Jackson took No. 75 Squadron on a dawn raid against the Japanese airfield at Lae . Rather than attacking directly from the south , he led the

Kittyhawks in from the east , where they would not be expected and where the rising sun would hide their approach . Achieving the surprise he had hoped for , Jackson made two strafing passes over the airfield , ignoring standard practice that called for only one such pass to reduce the risk from anti @-@ aircraft fire . The Australians claimed a dozen Japanese planes destroyed on the ground and five more damaged . They also shot down two Mitsubishi Zero fighters in the air , and lost two Kittyhawks over Lae , along with one that had crash @-@ landed on takeoff from Moresby . The Japanese struck back the next day , destroying two Kittyhawks at Seven Mile Aerodrome . With his losses mounting , Jackson was given permission to withdraw the squadron to Horn Island in Far North Queensland , but refused . On 4 April , Jackson made a solo reconnaissance over Lae , after which he led another four Kittyhawks on a raid against the airfield , claiming seven enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground without loss to themselves ; Japanese sources credited the Australians with only two machines destroyed , but seventeen others damaged . Two days later , Les Jackson was forced to ditch his aircraft on a coral reef , but made it to shore with the aid of a life jacket that John dropped to him , not realising at the time that the downed pilot was his younger brother .

Jackson himself had to ditch into the sea on 10 April , when he was shot down after being surprised by three Zeros during another of his solo reconnaissance missions near Lae . After playing dead beside his crashed plane to discourage the Japanese fighters from machine @-@ gunning him , he swam to shore and made his way through jungle for over a week to Wau , with the help of two New Guinea natives . When he arrived back at Port Moresby in a US Douglas Dauntless on 23 April , a Japanese air raid was in progress and a bullet cut off the tip of his right index finger . Having survived his trek through the jungle , he dismissed the wound as " a mere scratch " . On 27 April , Jackson met with his pilots and revealed that some senior RAAF officers had expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which No. 75 Squadron was avoiding dogfighting with the Japanese Zeros . Jackson and his men had generally eschewed such tactics owing to the Zero 's superiority to the Kittyhawk in close combat . The senior officers ' comments had evidently stung him , however , as he declared to his pilots : " Tomorrow I 'm going to show you how " . According to journalist Osmar White , who saw him on the night of the 27th , Jackson 's " hands and eyes were still and rock steady " but he appeared " weary in soul " and " too long in the shadows " . White concluded : " He had done more than conquer fear ? he had killed it " . The next day , Jackson led No. 75 Squadron 's five remaining airworthy Kittyhawks to intercept a force of Japanese bombers and their escort . He destroyed an enemy fighter before being shot down and killed . His aircraft hit the side of a mountain and embedded itself six feet ; Jackson was identified only by his size @-@ ten boots and the revolver he habitually wore . His final tally of aerial victories during the war was eight .

= = Legacy = =

Les Jackson took over command of No. 75 Squadron the day after his brother was killed . Although the squadron was no longer an effective fighting unit , it had checked Japan 's attempts to overpower Port Moresby by air attack , and the town continued to function as an important Allied base . John Jackson was survived by his wife and children , and interred in Moresby 's Bomana War Cemetery . His estate was sworn for probate at a value of £ 29 @, @ 780 (\$ 1 @, @ 870 @, @ 800 in 2011) . His name appears on panel 104 of the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) , Canberra . Jackson was a keen amateur film maker , and a four @-@ minute reel of 16 mm footage that he shot in Port Moresby is held by the AWM . Moresby 's Seven Mile Aerodrome was renamed Jackson 's Strip in his honour ; it later became Jacksons International Airport . In a 1989 interview , fellow No. 75 Squadron member Flight Lieutenant Albert Tucker commented , " I would say that had John F. Jackson not existed , the squadron would not have been effective in that defence role for as long as it was ... So the whole spirit of John F 's leadership , and I suppose his final sacrifice , was the thing that made 75 Squadron . " In March 2003 , the St George township erected a monument to Jackson and another local RAAF identity , Aboriginal fighter pilot Len Waters .