

= Leslie Douglas Jackson =

Leslie Douglas (Les) Jackson , DFC & Bar (24 February 1917 ? 17 February 1980) was an Australian fighter ace of World War II , credited with five aerial victories . Born in Brisbane , he was a businessman when he joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Reserve in 1937 . Called up for active duty shortly after the outbreak of war in September 1939 , he served with No. 23 Squadron in Australia before posting to the South West Pacific theatre with No. 21 Squadron in Singapore . In March 1942 he joined No. 75 Squadron in Port Moresby , New Guinea , flying P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks under the command of his eldest brother , John . During the ensuing Battle of Port Moresby , Les shot down four Japanese aircraft .

Jackson took over command of No. 75 Squadron after his brother was killed in action on 28 April 1942 , leading it in the Battle of Milne Bay later that year . Credited with a fifth aerial victory , he became the RAAF 's first ace in the New Guinea campaign , and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) . By 1944 , Jackson was wing leader of No. 78 (Fighter) Wing in Western New Guinea , gaining promotion to wing commander in September that year . Awarded a bar to his DFC in March 1945 , he served as chief flying instructor at No. 8 Operational Training Unit in Australia , and saw out the war as commander of Air Defence Headquarters , Madang . After leaving the RAAF in 1946 , Jackson returned to the business world , running two garages . He died in Southport , Queensland , in 1980 .

= = Early career = =

Les Jackson was born on 24 February 1917 in the Brisbane suburb of Newmarket , Queensland , the fourth son of businessman William Jackson and his wife Edith . His first job following education at Brisbane Grammar School was as an accountant in the family firm of J. Jackson & Co . Pty Ltd . He then set up his own business running a service station and garage in Surat , a rural area south @-@ west of Brisbane . In February 1935 , Jackson enlisted in the 2nd / 14th Light Horse Regiment , a Queensland @-@ based Militia unit .

Jackson followed his eldest brother , John , into the Royal Australian Air Force Reserve , known as the Citizen Air Force , in July 1937 . With the outbreak of World War II , Les was called up for active duty in the RAAF on 6 November 1939 . He learnt to fly as an air cadet at RAAF Station Point Cook , Victoria . Graduating as a pilot in February 1940 , he served initially with No. 23 Squadron at Archerfield , Queensland . In July 1941 , he was posted to the South West Pacific theatre with No. 21 Squadron in Singapore . Initially operating CAC Wirraways , the unit converted to Brewster Buffalos in September that year .

= = Combat service = =

= = = Port Moresby = = =

Completing his service with No. 21 Squadron in November 1941 , Jackson was again posted to No. 23 Squadron in Australia . In March 1942 , he joined No. 75 Squadron in New Guinea as a flight lieutenant , under the command of his brother , known as " Old John " . Operating P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks , the unit quickly became engaged in the defence of Port Moresby , one of the crucial early battles in the New Guinea campaign . As one of No. 75 Squadron 's flight commanders , Jackson took part in a surprise raid against Lae airfield on 22 March . Five Kittyhawks led by John Jackson attacked and destroyed a dozen Japanese planes on the ground , while four others including Les provided protective cover above ; he survived an encounter with three Mitsubishi Zeros that saw two of his fellow pilots shot down . Two days later he recorded his first aerial victory when he intercepted and destroyed a Zero escorting a force of bombers towards Port Moresby .

On 6 April , Jackson was forced to ditch his aircraft on a coral reef , but made it to shore with the aid of a life jacket that his brother John dropped to him . In the following weeks , Les accounted for

another three Japanese aircraft shot down . On 5 April , he was attacked from behind by a Zero while firing on bombers front @-@ on , but was able to turn the tables on the Japanese fighter and shoot it down in flames . The next day he went head to head with more Zeros , damaging two before being forced to ditch on a reef with a smoking engine ; once down he scrambled out of the cockpit and danced on the wing to let his comrades know he was safe . Jackson shot down his third victim on 17 April . He achieved his fourth victory against another Zero on 24 April , to become the highest Australian scorer in the Battle of Port Moresby . On 28 April , John Jackson was shot down and killed while leading the interception of a Japanese raid ; Les took over command of No. 75 Squadron the next day . On 30 April , the squadron was recalled to Australia to refit and regroup ; Jackson flew one of its last remaining serviceable aircraft to Cairns , Queensland , on 9 May .

= = = Milne Bay and after = = =

Following re @-@ equipment in Australia , Jackson led No. 75 Squadron back to New Guinea , arriving at Milne Bay on 25 July 1942 in company with another Kittyhawk unit , No. 76 Squadron . During the Battle of Milne Bay , Jackson ? s squadron was engaged in air defence against Japanese raiders and offensive strikes against convoys and other targets in support of Australian ground forces . On 25 August , the Kittyhawks launched an attack on enemy barges at Goodenough Island that resulted in all seven vessels being set on fire without the loss of any aircraft . The next day , Jackson personally led two of his unit 's five concerted strafing assaults on the main Japanese convoy approaching Milne Bay . On 27 August , he and a fellow pilot each claimed a Zero ; the Japanese fighters had been focussing on machine @-@ gunning one of their own aircraft that had crash @-@ landed following combat with a USAAF B @-@ 26 Marauder , presumably to prevent it falling into Allied hands , and were ' bounced ' by the Australian pilots . His victory made Jackson an ace , the first from the RAAF in New Guinea . By 28 August , Japanese troops were threatening to overrun the RAAF airfield at Milne Bay , and the Kittyhawk squadrons were ordered to withdraw to Port Moresby for one night . Returning to Milne Bay the next day , Jackson ? s plane developed trouble and he had to ditch on the coast ; with the help of New Guinea natives , he reached Port Moresby by boat three days later . By 7 September the Japanese had withdrawn their troops from the Milne Bay area ; Generals Sydney Rowell and Cyril Clowes both described the efforts of Nos. 75 and 76 Squadrons as " the decisive factor " in repulsing the invading forces .

No. 75 Squadron was redeployed to Horn Island , Queensland , in September 1942 , and Jackson handed over command to Squadron Leader John Meehan the following January . In recognition of his " courage and leadership " in New Guinea , Jackson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) , which was promulgated in the London Gazette on 26 March 1943 . Having served in staff positions in Australia during the year , he was appointed Wing Leader of No. 78 (Fighter) Wing , a component of the newly formed No. 10 Operational Group , in December 1943 . The wing participated in Operation Reckless , the assault on Hollandia and Aitape that opened the Western New Guinea campaign , in April 1944 . This was followed by the attack on Noemfoor , commencing in June . Jackson was promoted to acting Wing Commander in September 1944 . Completing his tour with No. 78 Wing in December , he was posted to No. 8 Operational Training Unit , New South Wales , as chief flying instructor . In March 1945 , Jackson was awarded a bar to his DFC for " determined and successful attacks on enemy installations and shipping " . That June , he took command of Air Defence Headquarters in Madang .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

Jackson continued to lead Air Defence Headquarters in Madang following the end of hostilities , before his commission was terminated in Brisbane on 8 February 1946 . Returning to the garage business in rural Queensland , he ran Active Service Motors at Roma and Western Queensland Motors in St George . He married Cynthia Molle at St Andrew 's Presbyterian Church , Southport , on 25 January 1947 ; the couple had three sons . Predeceased by his wife in 1974 , Jackson died of a cerebral hemorrhage at Southport on 17 February 1980 . He was survived by his children , and

cremated in an Anglican ceremony .