

= Frank Lukis =

Air Commodore Francis William Fellowes (Frank) Lukis , CBE (27 July 1896 ? 18 February 1966) was a senior commander in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . A veteran of World War I , he first saw combat as a soldier in the Australian Imperial Force at Gallipoli . In 1917 , Lukis transferred to the Australian Flying Corps and flew with No. 1 Squadron in the Middle East , where he was twice mentioned in despatches . A member of the Australian Air Corps following the war , he transferred to the fledgling RAAF in 1921 , and became the first Commanding Officer of the newly re @-@ formed No. 3 Squadron at RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales , in 1925 .

Lukis went on to lead No. 1 Squadron in the early 1930s , and was promoted to group captain in 1938 . Appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire the same year , he was in charge of RAAF Station Laverton , Victoria , during the early years of World War II . He later held forward commands in the South West Pacific theatre , including Northern Area (later North @-@ Eastern Area) , for which he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire , and No. 9 Operational Group (later Northern Command) . Lukis also served on the Air Board , the RAAF 's controlling body , as Air Member for Personnel . After retirement from the Air Force in 1946 , he became a manager with Australian National Airways , and was active in veterans ' associations . He died in 1966 at the age of sixty @-@ nine .

= = Early life and World War I = =

Born on 27 July 1896 in Balingup , Western Australia , Frank Lukis was the son of grazier William Fellowes Lukis and his wife Jean . He was educated at The High School , Perth , and later worked on the family farm . In October 1914 , he joined the Australian Imperial Force as part of the 10th Light Horse Regiment , the only such regiment raised in Western Australia . Ranked corporal , Lukis sailed from Fremantle aboard A47 Mashobra on 17 February 1915 , seeing combat first at Gallipoli and then in Egypt . At Gallipoli , the 10th Light Horse went into action in the Battles of the Nek and Hill 60 , before being withdrawn in December and redeployed to Egypt . There it took part in the campaign against the Turks in Sinai , including the Battle of Romani .

Lukis was commissioned as a second lieutenant in July 1916 and promoted to lieutenant in December . On 25 February 1917 , he transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) and was posted to No. 1 Squadron (also known until 1918 as No. 67 Squadron , Royal Flying Corps) , operating in Sinai and Palestine . He undertook reconnaissance missions as an observer in Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2s from April to September 1917 . In January 1918 he completed pilot training and began flying fighter and ground attack sorties in Bristol Fighters . He was twice mentioned in despatches for distinguished service with the AFC in the Middle East , the first gazetted on 16 January 1918 , and the second on 12 January 1920 . Lukis finished the war a flight commander with the temporary rank of captain , and returned to Australia on 5 March 1919 .

= = Between the wars = =

With the disbandment of the wartime AFC , Lukis joined the short @-@ lived Australian Air Corps early in 1920 . He transferred to the newly formed Royal Australian Air Force in March the following year . Ranked flying officer (honorary flight lieutenant) , he was one of the original twenty @-@ one officers on the Air Force 's strength at its formation , and became popularly known as " Luke " . In February 1922 , he surveyed the air route between Perth and Port Augusta , South Australia . He took part in one of the embryonic service 's earliest public flying displays in May that year , when he and another pilot flew Airco DH.9s in mock dogfights with four Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5s during the New South Wales Aerial Pageant at Victoria Park , Sydney . On 21 January 1925 , he married Florence St Aubyn Allen at St Mary 's Anglican Church , West Perth ; the couple later had two sons . The previous year , Lukis had been best man at the wedding of Squadron Leader Frank McNamara , the AFC 's only Victoria Cross recipient in World War I .

No. 3 Squadron was re @-@ formed at RAAF Point Cook , Victoria , on 1 July 1925 , with Lukis as

its Commanding Officer (CO) . Over the next week , operating DH.9s and S.E.5s , the unit established itself at the Air Force 's newest base , RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales . Alerted to a forthcoming inspection by the Chief of the Air Staff , Group Captain Richard Williams , Lukis had the foresight to engage in a speedy beautification program at the base , arranging delivery of pot plants and shrubs ; the notoriously fastidious Williams concluded the inspection by pronouncing himself " happily surprised ... that so much had been done so quickly " . For the duration of his tour as No. 3 Squadron commander , Lukis doubled as CO of the base . He was promoted squadron leader on 2 July 1927 , and handed over command to Squadron Leader Harry Cobby on 13 January 1930 . Lukis served as CO of No. 1 Squadron from 1930 to 1934 , interrupted in 1931 by a posting to Britain to attend RAF Staff College , Andover . Raised to wing commander , he was placed in charge of No. 1 Aircraft Depot at RAAF Station Laverton , Victoria , in 1936 . He held command of No. 1 Flying Training School at Point Cook from January 1938 to November 1939 , receiving appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the 1938 King 's Birthday Honours , and promotion to group captain in July the same year .

= = World War II = =

The CO of RAAF Station Laverton from December 1939 , Lukis was made acting air commodore and posted to Townsville , Queensland , on 8 May 1941 as the inaugural Air Officer Commanding Northern Area . Described by Major General Lewis H. Brereton , commander of the US Far East Air Force , as " a dark , husky , energetic man with a keen sense of humour " who was very much " alive to the situation " , Lukis was in charge of air defence for the north coast of Australia . His task was complicated by the poor standard and quantity of available equipment , with only CAC Wirraways as fighters . In January 1942 , Northern Area was split into North @-@ Western Area and North @-@ Eastern Area , Lukis remaining in charge of the latter as a temporary air commodore . The following month , he warned higher command of the poor state of preparedness and low morale of Australian Army troops at Port Moresby , New Guinea , due to lack of air cover and apparent lack of interest from government echelons . In March , seventeen P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks of No. 75 Squadron , newly formed under North @-@ Eastern Area Command , were deployed ; the unit would shortly distinguish itself in the Battle of Port Moresby .

By the end of April 1942 , Lukis ' forces consisted of three squadrons (general purpose , transport , and fighter) at Townsville , one general purpose squadron at RAAF Station Amberley in southern Queensland , and four squadrons (three general purpose and one fighter) at Port Moresby . Posted to RAAF Headquarters , Melbourne , as Air Member for Personnel , he handed over command of North @-@ Eastern Area to Group Captain (later Air Commodore) Harry Cobby on 25 August . On 23 March 1943 , Lukis was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for the " courage , enterprise and devotion " that he had displayed at North @-@ Eastern Area . As Air Member for Personnel , he occupied a seat on the Air Board , the RAAF 's controlling body that was chaired by the Chief of the Air Staff . In this position he clashed with Group Officer Clare Stevenson , Director of the Women 's Auxiliary Australian Air Force , over plans to reduce the number of female officers in technical roles . Stevenson was forced to apologise to Lukis for going over his head to the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff to voice her opposition to the scheme ; nevertheless , cuts to these positions did not eventuate .

In November 1943 , Lukis took over No. 9 Operational Group (No. 9 OG) , the RAAF 's main mobile formation in the Pacific at the time , after its commander , Air Commodore Joe Hewitt , was sacked by the Chief of the Air Staff , Air Vice Marshal George Jones , over allegations of poor discipline and morale . The change in leadership dismayed the US @-@ led South West Pacific Area Command , whose senior air officers , Lieutenant General George Kenney and Major General Ennis Whitehead , did not hold Lukis in the same high regard that they did his predecessor . For the next two months , No. 9 OG supported the Allied invasion of New Britain . On 17 January 1944 , Lukis mounted an operation with a force of seventy @-@ three aircraft comprising Bristol Beaufort light bombers and Kittyhawk and Spitfire fighters , which was the largest strike undertaken by the Australians to that date . However it encountered no opposition , and Lukis voiced his concerns to

Whitehead that the " mopping up " role he had been assigned was costing his fighter pilots the opportunity to engage in air @-@ to @-@ air combat .

As the Pacific conflict shifted further north , No. 9 OG 's operational tasking lessened and it became colloquially known in the RAAF as the " Non @-@ Ops Group " . When ordered to transfer one of his fighter wings , No. 73 , to the Admiralty Islands for convoy escort in late February , Lukis complained directly to Kenney that it was a waste of resources , but was over @-@ ruled . The rest of No. 9 OG became a garrison force in New Guinea , and was renamed Northern Command on 11 April 1944 to better reflect this new status ; its original mobile strike role was taken over by No. 10 Operational Group (later the Australian First Tactical Air Force) . Lukis was again considered for the position of Air Member for Personnel when the incumbent , acting Air Vice Marshal Adrian Cole , was removed from his position following accusations of drunkenness at an RAAF Headquarters meeting in November 1944 . In the event , Lukis remained in charge of Northern Command . The following April , he took command of No. 2 Training Group in Melbourne , and held this post for the remainder of the Pacific War .

= = Later life = =

Lukis took up his final RAAF posting , as Air Officer Commanding Eastern Area , in December 1945 . With the end of hostilities , he was summarily retired along with a number of other senior commanders and veterans of World War I , ostensibly to make way for the advancement of younger and equally capable officers . According to RAAF historian Alan Stephens , the Air Board believed that Lukis " had not taken a role commensurate with his seniority during the war , a strange accusation to make against a man who had been Air Member for Personnel and AOC of the RAAF 's most important operational group in the Southwest Pacific Area " . He was officially discharged on 2 May 1946 . Employed by Australian National Airways (ANA) after leaving the Air Force , Lukis become airfield manager at Essendon , Melbourne . He took over the airline 's Canberra office in 1952 , before joining a stockbroking firm in 1957 , the year that ANA merged with Ansett Airways to become Ansett @-@ ANA . Active in veterans ' organisations , he served as president of the Air Force Association in Victoria during 1947 ? 48 , and helped found the Commonwealth Club in Canberra in 1954 . Survived by his wife and children , Frank Lukis died in Melbourne of cancer on 18 February 1966 , and was cremated .