

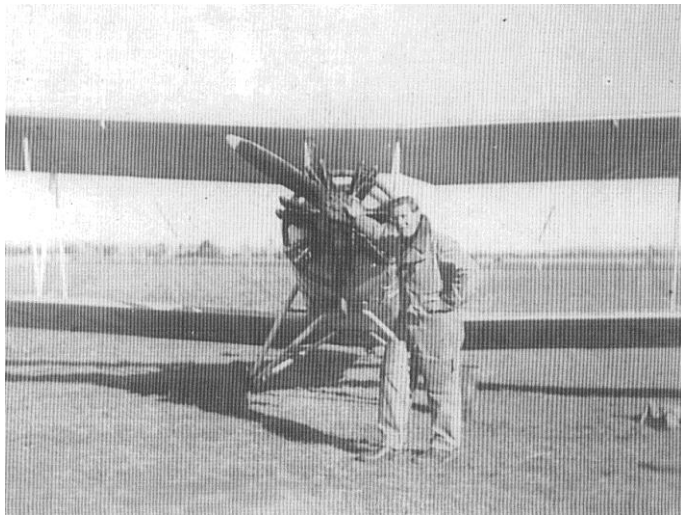
# Squadron Leader Douglas Leckie

## OBE, AFC, Polar Medal

### Winner of the Oswald Watt Gold Medal

Doug Leckie was a true aviation pioneer. Doug was providing flying instruction in the Latrobe Valley even before the LVAC was formed.

Prior to the September 1949 inaugural meeting of the Club was formed, Doug, by arrangement with Des Kelly, commenced flying training at weekends from the Brinsmead property southwest of Morwell in April 1949 using his own aircraft, an AVRO 643 Cadet VH-AFW.



*Doug Leckie and his Avro Cadet at Morwell 1949*

Doug was born in Sandringham in June 1920, he left Australia when he was only 6 weeks old, and spent his early childhood in Malaya, where his father Captain Peter Leckie was a surveyor with the British Colonial Services. Doug returned to Australia for his schooling at Ivanhoe and Melbourne Grammar Schools.

Doug started flying seaplanes with the Royal Singapore Flying Club in Keppel Harbour, and gained his private pilots licence when he was only 16 years old. He flew for the British Army testing searchlights at night and Army Co-op for the Straits Settlements Volunteer Airforce, as a navigator and rear gunner during the day.

Douglas returned to Australia in 1938, and gained his commercial licence through Australian National Airways at Essendon, and then worked as a flying instructor with the Royal Victorian Aero Club.



*Doug Leckie flies a Royal Victorian Aero Club Tiger Moth over the Melbourne Shrine 1939*

Doug joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1940 at Point Cook, and served during World War 2 until 1945. He instructed at various units on the Australian mainland, training in Tiger Moths, Ansons, Boomerangs and he flew over 200 different Wirraways. He served in 24 Squadron in Townsville doing coastal surveillance and with 23 Squadron ferrying planes to New Guinea.



*Flt Ltn Leckie Brisbane 1941*

He completed an operational tour in the South West Pacific with 4 Squadron assisting the Army Units in New Guinea doing surveillance of enemy ground positions. He flew Boomerang aircraft, running safe hand mail and search & rescue flights, in the Rescue and Communications Unit in New Guinea and the Trobrian Islands.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1943 Douglas was involved with the rescue of Bishop Philip Strong who was a passenger in an Army Dragon that crashed on take off.

He also put out a fire on a Short Empire Flying boat, saving over 30 lives onboard. Towards the end of the war he was Squadron Commander and Chief Instructor at Uranquinty and was Captain of the swimming team there. In September 1945 he left the Air Force and in the New Year's Honours 1946 received the King's Commendation for Meritorious Service in the Air, and Mention In Despatches.



*Doug with Wirraway advanced trainer 1942.*

Post war Doug instructed at Yarram and Latrobe Valley Aero Clubs in South Gippsland as well dairy farming on the family property in Binginwarri.

He was reappointed to the RAAF in 1951, after an Instructors Course at East Sale, and was posted to Point Cook as a Flying Instructor and Flight Commander.

In 1953 he was appointed Officer in Command of the first post war Antarctic Flight below the Antarctic Circle, assisting Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition, establishing Mawson base in 1954 and he was awarded the Air Force Cross in 1955.



Later that year he was appointed OIC of the RAAF Antarctic Flight, leaving Australia in December 1955 remaining at Mawson for the winter of 1956 and returning in March 1957.

This was the first time the RAAF had operated an aircraft the whole year below the Antarctic Circle, flying the DeHavilland Beaver, using tractor headlights as a flare path during the dark winter months.



1955-1956 R.A.A.F. ANTARCTIC FLIGHT. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT -  
SOT. JOHANSON, FLT.OFF. SEATON, SQN.LDR. LECKIE, SOT. SUNDBERG,  
FLT.LT. CLEMENCE.

In the New Year's Honours 1958 Squadron Leader Leckie was presented The Officer of the Order of the British Empire (Military Division). Part of that citation reads; "In his leadership of the RAAF Antarctic Flight and his untiring work as a pilot, Squadron Leader Leckie showed great initiative, courage and determination in the face of extreme hardship and difficulties. His abilities contributed greatly to the successful completion by the Expedition of a most valuable and extensive year's work".

Douglas returned to the RAAF in 1958 to form a third Antarctic Flight to Wilkes Land. He returned to Australia and resumed his flying duties as Senior Pilot with the Snowy Mountains Authority.

Finally discharged from the Air Force in 1959 he was awarded the Oswald Watt Medal by the Royal Federation of Aero Clubs for "The most outstanding achievement in the air by an Australian". He was also awarded the Polar Medal in that year.

In Gippsland in 1960 Doug started Leckie Aviation Services with the Tiger Moth VH-ABC. Flying extensively throughout South Gippsland from Woodside to Leongatha, from Mirboo North to Lower Tarwin, top dressing with super phosphate and spraying for weed control.

From 1962 to 1967 he was agricultural flying with Airlands Pty Ltd at Cootamundra NSW. When Douglas came back to Victoria, he worked as a flying instructor at Moorabbin Airport, at Pipeair and Campbell Hicks Airways.

He went south again to the Antarctic in 1971 and 1972 with ANARE, flying the Pilatus Porter, the aircraft he loved the most.

After an impressive career in aviation, he worked for the Herald and Weekly Times and Independent newspapers, a nice safe desk job.

Douglas lived in Mornington for 30 years, his funeral service was held at St. Peters Church in Mornington with the RSL service and a Scottish piper and a tribute fly over by the Latrobe Valley Aero Club member Geoff Goldsmith.

Douglas was married to Dorothy for 65 years (now deceased) and is survived by 3 daughters, 4 granddaughters and 8 great grandchildren.

