



*An aerial view of RAAF Garbutt, Townsville, on 19 March 1942. Two days later a Betty overflew this base on a reconnaissance mission.*

of any significance, aside from the airfield that was occasionally used by the RAAF. Both Bettys arrived back at Lae that afternoon after flights of seven-and-a-half and eight hours' duration.

Jackson's plan was to hit Lae very early on 22 March with a surprise fighter sweep: five Kittyhawks would strafe parked aircraft while another five provided overhead cover. A pair of No. 32 Squadron Hudsons would then bomb the field and take photos to assess the damage. The two B-17Es would also bomb from high altitude.

Given the few hours that some pilots had on Kittyhawks, it is not surprising that there was an accident early on 22 March at Seven-Mile. Pilot Officer John Brereton (flying A29-22 Code "C") swerved on take-off in to avoid a taxiing Hudson. His wingtip struck a mound and ground-looped the aircraft, ripping off both main gears and setting fire to the Kittyhawk. A shaken Brereton was retrieved by two medical officers.

The other nine Kittyhawks got off safely. The five strafers were led by John Jackson (A29-7 "A") and also comprised Flying Officer Bruce Anderson (A29-16 "Y"), Flying Officer John Piper (A29-71 "B"), Flying Officer Barry Cox (A29-5 "E") and Flying Officer Jeffery Woods (A29-29 "I"). The top cover, now reduced to four, was made up of Peter Turnbull (A29-12 "T"), Les