

July 1945: Form 540

159 Squadron

Place	Date	Summary of Events
		July Form 540
		Operations.
Digri	4/7/45.	Minelaying – Merlong, Prachaub Cirikan, Chomphorn. 4 Liberator VI. 2 Liberator VIII.
		It is noted that no mines have been laid on the Western Side of the Burma/Thailand land mass since 5th. June, and it is apparent that the Allied Naval Forces are well able to look after any craft which attempt to use these waters In the Gulf of Thailand however, small craft of approximately 100 feet are carrying supplies northward to Bangkok and the fighting zone in an effort to supplement the Banpong – Singapore Railway, so often broken by this and other Liberator Squadrons. This sortie was without incident, and all mines were successfully laid.
	10/7/45	Bombing & Minelaying. Bangkok. 5 Liberator VI 5 " VIII.
		Eight aircraft were detailed to attack Railway Workshops and Warehouses, and the remaining two to lay mines in the Bangkok River. One aircraft returned with its load of mines due to bad weather in the Bay of Bengal, where the ceiling was frequently down to zero, with very heavy rains from CB clouds. There was moderately accurate predicted A.A. Fire over the target, and two aircraft were slightly damaged, but without injury to crew members. On aircraft received damage to the starboard outer engine and returned to Base on three. This aircraft crashed on landing and was a complete write-off. The crew escaped with only superficial injuries. This is the first accident of any kind to occur on this Squadron during 1945.
	15/7/45.	Bombing – Singora. 3 Liberator VI. 5 Liberator VIII.
		In view of the success and saving of flying time achieved by the last detachment to Akyab, a further eight aircraft went forward, and carried out their first attack to-day. The targets were Shipping at Singora and warehouses in the waterfront area. Little Shipping was seen, but attacks were made on two 80/100 ft. vessels, apparently loaded, and another ship of the Corvette type. A newsreel Cameraman was carried in one of the aircraft and took pictures of the attack. He was fortunate enough to see one of our Submarines attacking surface craft. Three ships are known to have been sunk and many building demolished.
	17/7/45.	Bombing – Singora. 3 Liberator VI. . 5 Liberator VIII
		A further attack from Akyab, concentrating this time on waterfront warehouses as a primary target. This is known to be a storage area for rice, used to supply troops fighting on the Burma Front. A good concentration of bombing was achieved, and the crews returned to Akyab in high spirits. The ground crews did an excellent job at Akyab despite rather more primitive conditions than at Digri. However, the climate was rather better and crews spent their spare time bathing in the sea, and many suntanned bodies were seen.
	21/7/45.	Bombing – Singora. 8 Liberator VIII
		Yet a further attack on this important store area carried out from Akyab. The bombing was confined to buildings, and the photographs show good accurate results. All bombing was done at 300 feet, and was done in the normal 159 style, diving from 1,500 feet to 500 feet and levelling out at about 2210 m.p.h. immediately before releasing the bombs, in order to give the Air Bomber a correct angle of sight.
	27/7/45.	Bombing Bridges T.F. 26 & 44 on Banpong – Singapore Railway. 9 Liberator VIII.
		This bridge attack differed from previous bridge strikes, as it was decided to use 500 lb. I?. C. Mk.IX bombs, which were thought to be sufficiently powerful to accomplish what had previously called for 1,000 lbs. The force was divided into two each with a Master Bomber, and took their own bridges. Bombing at 500 feet was quite accurate for the most part, but although many well placed bombs exploded, the bridge only sustained superficial damage. There was no enemy opposition.

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		An attack was carried out by No.355 Squadron on bridges in the Pran Bori area to the north, at the same time.
	29/7/45.	Bombing – Bangkok. 3 Liberators VIII.
		This day can be described as a black one for No.159 Squadron for out of seven aircraft scheduled to take part in this raid, only three actually got off the ground. The cause seemed to be that owing to differences in the new Liberator VIII, especially in carburation. three aircraft were unable to develop sufficient r.p.m. and power for take-off. One aircraft was held back by electrical failures.
		Of the three aircraft which participated in the raid, one, F/Lt. C.F. Williams (R.C.A.F.) was Master Bomber and supplied the bombing wind to 199? and 355 Squadrons. Low cloud over the target interfered with the bombing which was ordered at a minimum eight of 1,000 feet. The ground defences were also baulked by the cloud, and apart from some predicted H.A.A. fire, there was no opposition. No fighters have been active in this area for a considerable period, although Photographic Reconnaissance Cover occasionally shows them in the area.
		Appendix.
		Most of the Squadrons activity has been away from Digri this month, and crews have been detached to 358 Squadron at Jessore to assist in special duties (supply dropping etc.) to Akyab, and a number of aircraft were sent to Karachi in the middle of the month to help out Transport Command. It will be seen that there is plenty of variety to be found in the work of 159 Squadron at present.
		On 1st. July, there was a big change at Digri with the departure of 185 Wing, and the absorption of our Squadron under 184 Wing at Salbani. We lost a good deal of our M.T. and many of the conveniences which we had taken for granted. The complete Flying Control organisation moved out to be replaced with personnel from Dhubalia, the home of 99 Squadron.
		During the month 99 and 356 Squadrons move out of this area completely, and took up their home in the Cocos Islands, south of the Equator. This left 355 and 159 as the sole remaining Heavy Bombing Squadrons in the area, as all our friends from the U.S.A. have long since moved their Superfortresses and Liberators out of the area. Strategic Air Force no longer comes under the control of Maj./Gen. Stratemeyer and now becomes a purely R.A.F. Organisation In view of the shortage of Heavy bombers in this area, the need for us to fulfil the role of Pathfinders become less and all target Indicating was done for the benefit of 355 Squadron and ourselves.
		Training.
		There were two significant factors which influenced training this month to a considerable extent. firstly, the Squadron was called upon to maintain three detachments. These detachments call for five, eight, and five crews respectively, for approximately two weeks. Secondary twelve aircrews became tour expired, and as full replacements were not available the existing crews were hard pressed to meet operations requirements.
		Training was by no means neglected, however, and considerable work was done. Three crews were screened, and are now up to full operational standard. Their training included Night flying, H2X, and considerable medium and low level bombing.
		Aircrew Categorization.
		With the receipt of the Aircrew Categorization Booklets, an all out effort was made to bring crews up to top standard. The Sections organized discussions based on questions in the booklets, and considerable interest was developed. Definite progress is being made along these lines.
		H2X Training.
		Progressed to a point where four crews were fully operational and seven others had completed ground training. They require only a Screen Cross Country to be considered fully trained. Crews which are nearly tour expired are not being fully trained as both Instructors and Sets are required for the crews who will receive most benefit. The introduction of H2X on operational flights has greatly improved the accuracy of fixes obtained. This accuracy has given the Navigators greater confidence in fixing their position in difficult monsoon flying.
		Navigation.
		A change was made to knots and nautical miles for all navigation work, and was welcomed by most Navigators.
		19 Compasses have been swung, astro brackets, drift meters, and rear turrets aligned, and a start made on the swinging of radio compass loops. Back plotting of logs has been introduced with excellent results.
		Gunnery.

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		In addition to discussions held on aircrew categorization, gunners continued their normal training programme. Ten hours were spent on the zone trainer. Flight Engineers received four hours of lectures on the Mk.5 Browning. In addition, 400 rounds of .12 bore Shot Gun ammunition have been fired.
		Signals.
		Six new W/Ops. were posted to the Squadron from R.F.U. They were given a concentrated weeks course on Strategic Air Force procedure. Four Grade !! W/Ops were trained for a grading board. A number of lectures were given on the lines of the Aircrew Categorization Booklet.
		Practice Bombing.
		The calibration of Bombsights was continued and most are considered to be in top condition at present. In this training, detachments interfered more so than in other phases, as a continual supply of aircraft and crews had to be maintained on detachments. In spite of this interference however, a total number of 566 practice bombs were dropped comprising medium and low level, and special tactics evolved for Shipping Strikes. Three new Crews were brought up to standard.
		Flying Hours.
		Operational "A" 303.20 Non-Operational "A" 220.40
		"B" 408.00 "B" 163.15
		Jessore 68.05 Jessore 7.50
		779.25 391.45
		Total 1171.10.
		Bombs Dropped.
		Bombs. Mines.
		14 x 1,000 lb. G.P. 102 x 1,000 lb. M.47
		147 x 500 lb. M.C. 14 x 1,000 lb. M.13/5?
		16 x 500 lb. G.P. 14 x 1,000 lb. Mk.VII.
		220 x 250 lb. M.C. 130,000 lb.
		3 x 250 lb. Yellow T.I.
		163,500 lb.
		Total 293,500 lb. 134.03 Tons.
		Part II. – Administration. July 1945.
		Quite a considerable amount of general interest was created by the introduction of some new Campaign Stars. It created a certain amount of satisfaction as it had been observed that the majority of Army personnel had been wearing the 1943 and Burma Stars some considerable time ago. A number of Squadron Personnel will become eligible for the Burma Star.
		It was announced that personnel who had served in South Africa (a three year area) would only have to serve the corresponding ratio of remaining time in India. This affected about 14 Airmen of this Squadron.
		A considerable number of Statements of Accounts are now filtering through from the B.A.O. for Airmen. This has been a long awaited pleasure, some men having waited for over three years for same.
		The taking of Mepacrine Tablets was introduced in order to combat against the rising incidence of Malaria all over the Bengal Area. This is enforced as a disciplinary measure, and one tablet is taken by all personnel daily at tiffin time. A campaign has been created to eliminate the camp of malaria breeding places and items such as receptacles containing water, small pools etc.
		Considerable interest created by the announcement of the Executive Signal on release of personnel for demobilization. On 1st. August the first man to be released from the Squadron was prepared for onward despatch to No. 3 Release Embarkation Centre, Worli, Bombay.
		Medical Report.
		Statistics. Admissions to Hospital
		Admissions Remaining on 31.7.45.
		G.S. A.C. G.S. A.C.
		Amoebic dysentery (New cases) Nil. 2. Nil. 2.
		Clinical dysentery 1. 2. Nil. Nil.
		??illary dysentery 2. Nil. Nil. Nil.
		Heat Effects. Nil. 1. Nil. Nil.
		Venereal Disease 1. 1. 1. Nil.

Place	Date	Summary of Events			
				G.S.	A.C.
		Total admission to Hospital ??????		25?	16?
		Total remaining in Hospital at end of month.		9.	4.
		Daily Sick Parade state?			
		G.S.	A.C.	Total.	Average Daily.
		300	214	514	16.5
		Non-Effective Sick Aircrew at end of month.			
		Pilots.	Wop/Air.	Flt/Eng.	Air/Bom.
		2	3	4	2
		Casualties.			
		One aircraft ran? off runway on return from operations, two of the crew were treated at S.S.Q. for minor abrasions and sent back to duty.			
		An accident between tow lorries resulted i one Officer being admitted to 56.M.F.H. and two other Officers treated at S.S.Q. for minor abrasions.			
		Part III. Personnel.			
		The following were granted commissions, and reported as Officers on the Squadron on the dates stated:-			
		1941331	W/O. Brown, P.A.	Pilot.	24.7.45.
		643704	W/O. Green, G.	Pilot.	24.7.45.
		A.416990	W/O. Payne, L.A.	Nav.B.	16.7.45.
		A.428790	W/O. Rial, H.L.	A/G.	21.7.45.
		A.414725	W/O. Newman, W.J.	Pilot.	21.7.45.
		1382302	W/O. Cole, A?.A.	W/Air.	15.7.45.
		1804138	F/S. Glicker, H.	Nav.	26.7.45.
		The following crews were tour expired during the month of July :-			
		F/Lt. Borthwick, R.M. and crew.			
		P/O. Masengarh?, M.C. " "			
		F/Lt. Kinnear, S. " "			
		F/O. Haycock, J?. N?. " "			
		P/O. Newman, A. W. " "			
		P/O. DeNett, T.M. " "			
		P/O. Green, G. " "			
		F/Lt. Foot, C?.I?. " "			
		Promotions – Officers.			
		F/O. Kinnear, S.	GD(P)	J.10566.	F/Lt. 1.12.44.
		P/O. Kenney, W.H.	GD(G)	165926	F/O. 28.1.45.
		F/O. Iles, L.H?.	GD(G)	139696	F/Lt. 1.3.45.
		F/O. Brantingham, G.F.	GD(N)	145358	F/Lt. 19.3.45.
		F/O. Titchmarth, T.	GD(N)	151663	F/Lt. 19.3.45.
		P/O. Thomas, W.B.	GD(G)	165179	F/O. 19.11.44.
		P/O. Brown, W.	GD(G)	165817	F/O. 14.1.45.
		P/O. Henderson, J.F.	GD(W)	14?5778	F/O. 14.1.45.
		P/O. Thompson, R.	GD(AB)	165746	F/O. 14.1.45.
		P/O. Davis, A.G.J.	GD(P)	170994	F/O. 22.1.45.
		.P/O. Dale, H.M.	GD(AB)	J.45986	F/O. 2.12.44.
		F/O. Oakley, G.R	GD(S)	167747	A/F/Lt. 1.3.45.
		F/O. Mills, F.D.	GD(N)	146043	F/Lt. 24.4.45.
		Special Movements.			
		P/O. Corlett, J. GD(S). Proceeded to No. 5 Radio School, M.E. for Signals Leader Course, 31.7.45.			
		F/O. Hagan, P.J., Nav.B. Posted to B.R.D. Worli for repatriation, 4.8.45.			
		F/O. Justhan, D.G. GD(P), Proceeded to A.A.T.R. School for No. 1 Ship Recog. Course, 20.7.45.			
		F/Lt. Brantingham, G.F. Nav.B. Detached to U.K. for Staff Navigation Course, 6.7.45.			
		Six Canadian Aircrew N.C.Os, proceeded to B.R.D., Worli pending embarkation w.e.f. 17.7.45.			
		R W/Air.)			
		1 A/B.)	Proceeded to B.R.D. Worli for repatriation to U.K. on 7.7.45. (Spare aircrew)		

Place	Date	Summary of Events
		3 F/Es.) surplus to requirements.)
		37 A/Gs.)
		1831296. F/Sgt. Dent, R.W. Proceeded to Bombay for repatriation on Medical grounds on 29.7.45.
		Casualties.
		F/Lt. S.W. Wells, No.1030003, Nav.B. was killed in an aircraft crash on 25.7.45, which occurred at R.A.F. Station, Armada Road, where he was on attachment for a Bombing Leaders Course. The aircraft in which he was flying Liberator VI. EW355 collided in Mid-air with another Liberator EW47 ¹ , and crashed to the ground. The aircraft was completely smashed and there were no survivors. A Memorial Service was held at R.A.F. Armada Rd. on 2.8.45, at which members of the Squadron were present.
		Part IV. Historical Record.
		The following received awards as stated for meritorious Service whilst on the Squadron:-
		121562. F/Lt. Brennan, G. Nav.B. D.F.C. 24.7.45.
		1254231. F/Sgt. Hulbert, J. Nav.B. D.F.M. "
		189?629. P/O. Pinder, G. ? Nav.B. D.F.C. "
		145258. F/O. Brantingham, G.F. Nav.B. Bar to D.F.C. "
		52870. A/W/Cdr. Ercolani, L.G. Pilot. Bar to D.S.O. "
		Part V. General.
		39 Aircrew personnel were able to proceed on leave during this month.
		The feeling concerning the Election was not marked by any heated discussions and it is considered that for the Left and Right, the favours were equally divided for the whole Squadron. The results were on the whole taken very philosophically.
		Resume of Month's Work and Morale of Unit.
		The highlights of the operations for the month were the attacks on Singora. This is one of the largest rice distributing centres in that area. The attacks were made by aircraft on detachment to Akyab. The Squadron was assigned the task of destroying as much of the stores and warehouses as possible. The last two attacks were the most successful, using target maps made from photographs taken on the first operation, and bombing from low level. Once again the stay at Akyab afforded a welcome change to both Aircrew and ground crew.
		Amazingly little interest was shown for the General Election. Full arrangements were made for voting, complete with a detachment from the R.A.F. Camera Unit, but even so, only few seemed? to avail themselves of the opportunity. The Labour victory certainly appeared to be popular.
		Generally throughout the month the same high spirit and enthusiasm for "getting the aircraft into the air" no matter whatever the weather or time of day, prevailed. The ground crews have done a really magnificent job, not ceasing their endeavours until their aircraft were again serviceable.
		(L.B. Ercolani.) Wing Commander, Commanding, No.159 Squadron. R.A.F.

¹ An obvious error in the serial number. The crash was between EW225 and EW247.