

June 1945: Form 540

159 Squadron

Place	Date	Summary of Events
		Month of June, 1945
		Part I. – Operations.
Digri	12th June 1945	Minelaying Satamir Bay, Thailand 4 Liberator VI. Bombing Satimar Bay, Thailand 10 Liberator VI
		A previous medium level attack had been carried out against this Thai Naval anchorage, but without spectacular success. In view of the great difficulty of obtaining hits on moving surface craft from medium level, a skip bombing technique was evolved. The plan was for some aircraft to bomb at medium level at once, and when all attention was directed against them, for the low level aircraft to skip in and do their work; at the same time have four aircraft mine the entrance of the harbour to discourage escape.
		The attack was lead b Wig Commander Ercolani, who acted as Master Bomber. Bombing was successful and the principal target, and Anthong class submarine depot ship was hit, and after burning fiercely, eventually sank. F/Lt. Williams (R.C.A.F.) attacked ?? all tanker which was seen to explode and sink.
		One aircraft natural due to weather conditions encountered en route, and one landed at Ramree due to engine failure.
		Straffing of train; and locomotives was carried out by aircraft at Bhruri.
	June 5th	Minelaying –Tachin Nerlong River, Prachaub Girikan, Bangkok. 12 Liberator IV.
		An all out minelaying effort carried out in conjunction with Liberators of 355 and 356 Squadron at Salbani. It was impressed on crews that this minelaying was of especial importance, and should be carried out at all costs; for this reason an extra bomb bay tank of fuel was carried. Crews were advised to land at forward bases, Akyab, Ramree etc, if in any doubt about fuel.
		Weather en route was bad, due to the northward movement of the Inter Tropical Front, and the onset of the S.W. Monsoons. Over the target however, the weather and visibility was good.
		Two aircraft landed at Ramree due to engine failure and one due to weather. One aircraft landed at Alipore, after having been airborne over 19 hours, being unable to locate base. This crew (F/Lt. Ellis (RCAF)) had a wounded Flight Engineer on board, having been hit by machine gun fire in the Bangkok River.
		No fighter opposition was encountered over the Bangkok area, when such opposition was considered possible.
	June 8th.	Bombing Bilin. 8 Liberator VI. Japanese dump area and troop concentrations.
		Two aircraft carried Target indicators, in order to mark the target, and the remainder carried 52 x 100 lb. fragmentation bombs. T.I's. were dropped at H – 3 and at five minute intervals throughout the attack. 9/10ths. cloud over the target at a maximum height of 2,000 feet rendered the attack difficult, due to high ground in the area, and the use of instantaneous bomb fuses.
	June 10th.	Bombing – Kamaung?. 12 Liberator VI. Japanese Troop Concentrations.
		Weather over the target area was bad, with ceiling 1700 feet, and widespread showers, in which visibility was almost nil. Aircraft were able to locate one target with the aid of Target indicators dropped by two aircraft Bombs were dropped at minimum safety height. Aircraft carried 28 x 260 fragmentation bombs. Target was in small basha huts on the west bank of the Salween river, and intelligence stated that many Japanese troops were crossing the river at that point. There was no visible ground activity as area was thickly wooded. A good concentration of bombs was dropped in the target area and fires were seen burning at various points. No opposition of any kind was encountered. Nickels were dropped in the target area. Photographs were taken, but with difficulty due to weather conditions.
	June 12th.	Bombing – Alugale – 8 Liberator VI. Japanese troops.
		In accordance with current practice and as a means for getting practice for possible pathfinder work in future, two aircraft were employed to mark one target for the main force of bombers. This target was attacked at the special request of the Army in Burma, as troops were known to be assembling in strength at this point, possibly with a view to delaying our own attempt to push across the Sittang

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		River.
		Weather was poor over the target area with a ceiling generally of 500 feet. There was a small break, and bombing was possible. A good concentration of bombs was observed. 8" Vertical, and 14" Hand Held Obliques cameras were carried by all aircraft.
		Two aircraft returned to base due to adverse weather conditions encountered in Bay of Bengal. All aircraft were routed via Pagoda Pt. in order that if necessary it was possible to fly low without the danger of the Arakan Hills., which would have been manifest if a more direct route were used. At this time CB. Cloud are common in the Bay of Bengal, and most pilots fly low in an effort to avoid undue turbulence and possible entry into cumulonimilous clouds.
	June 13th.	Bombing. Shipping Strike Gulf of Thailand. 6 Liberator A/c.
		This was a last minute operation, decided on because of a sighting report just sent in. The form "B" was received at Digri at approximately 18.30 hours at the time when aircraft were just returning from the operation on Alugale. Some aircraft landed away and only six aircraft could be made available for a first light take off on the 13th. This necessitated the ground crews working throughout the night in some appalling weather with the aid of hastily rigged artificial lighting. Despite these difficulties, the full complement of aircraft was ready for take off in the morning. The reason for such a shortage of aircraft on the Squadron at this time is that time expired aircraft are not being replace as the new Liberator VIII are expected to arrive at any time. (See appendix.)
		The crews passed through some severe monsoon conditions on the way out to the target, but with one exception were able to cross the Ten Asserim Hills into the Gulf of Thailand. One aircraft returned to base because of engine failure and jettisoned bombs on the bombing range.
		The four aircraft were lead by F/Lt. R.W. Williams (RAF), acting as Master bomber and as an organised search failed to locate the designated target, were ordered to attack Satahip Bay., shipping. A number of destroyers were seen to be sheltering there. A medium level attack was carried out, but results were obscure, due to low cloud over the target. The aircraft unable to cross the hills attacked railway targets on the Moulamein line, with some success.
	June 15th.	Bombing, Shipping Koh Samui. 6 Lib. aircraft.
		As it appeared that the shipping for which the aircraft had been searching on the 13th June, had moved out of range to the south, a detachment of six aircraft went forward to Akyab, to carry out the strike from there. By using this base an increased range of over 300 miles was obtained. A detachment went forward from 355 Squadron and co-operated on this raid.
		The tanker was located, and its escort of one Mineicaze class destroyer and a small submarine chaser. An attack was carried out from 5,000 feet by this Squadron, and with Wing Commander Ercolani as Master Bomber, many hits were scored. Fires were seen to break out, and the crew abandoned one ship. Smoke reached 5,000 feet and it subsequently sank.
	June 17th.	Bombing, Shipping Strike South of Koh Samui. 5 Liberator aircraft.
		In view of the success of the previous attack, a further sortie started out from Akyab in search of the escort of the tanker. The search extended into the South China Sea, but one destroyer was not found. The secondary target was shipping at Bandon and Jumphorn and as a last resort rolling stock on the Banpong Singapore railway. Two submarine chasers were successfully attacked and also trains at Patalung. The same team participated in this raid as June 15th.
	June 21st.	Minelaying. Bandon & Bangkok. 6 Liberator VI.
		A routine minelaying sortie with little in the nature of spectacular achievement or opposition. This in no way distracts from the importance for this work causes the Japanese a considerable amount of trouble.
	June 24th.	Bombing – Kanchanalcri? Bridge 7 Liberator VI. 4 " VIII.
		This bridge with its secondary by-pass bridge, on the line between Bangkok and the Burma Front on the Sittang River front presented a vital target. It was known to be well defended, with Heavy and Light A.A. and machine guns. The plan was for 159 Squadron to attack the main bridge, 356 to attack the by-pass bridge, and 355 to look after the ground defences, the first two at 500 feet, and the latter at 4-5,000. In addition three aircraft from 159 were loaded up wit 100 lb. fragmentation

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		bombs and told to cruise around and look for any activity of A.A. and attack with a Small Stock of bombs on their own initiative.
		Using the Master Bomber technique, this was a completely successful raid. Hits on the main bridge were made early in the attack by F/Lt. B?orthwick (RCAF) and by F/O Haycock (RNZAF). As 159's special target was successfully neutralized, the Master Bomber switched the remainder to the by-pass bridge, which was destroyed before the arrival of 356 Squadron, detailed to attack later.
		This was the first occasion upon which the Liberator VIII had been used on operations. (See Appendix).
	June 30th	Bombing – Boyagi – Japanese Troop Concentration. 4 Liberator VI. 4 " VIII.
		This was another attack called for by the Army and directed against troops in the area immediately to the East of the Sittang River. The cloud base over the target area was approximately 1000 Feet, and it was difficult for the crews to bomb and at the same time keep at the safety height of the bombs, 500 lb. M.C. The target was well Straddled with bombs.
		Appendix.
		This month was marked by the bringing into service of the Liberator VII ¹ , and their first use on operations. There is a radical change in crew positions, the Navigator being behind the Pilot on the Flight Deck, instead of in the nose compartment. The W/Operator is moved back to the Sports Deck over the bomb bay, from the Flight Deck. The usual roomy Flight Deck is now taken up by Loran and H2X equipment, and tables for the Navigator and Set Operator. The new equipment was used by freshly trained crews, and can be said to be eminently successful, and a very useful addition to the navigational aids. The Liberator VIII has Stromberg carburettors which are found to use approximately 10% more fuel than the previous Liberator VI with Ceco carbs.
		The weather this month was about the worst yet, due to the northward movement of the Inter Tropical Front, in the Bay of Bengal, and its attendant belt of cumulonimbus cloud, and medium cloud. The S.W. monsoon was due to break in Bengal in the middle of the month. For this reason every effort was made to confine flying to the daylight hours, in order to be able to avoid CB cloud. The H2X can be used to plot the worst accumulation of electrical storms, but the crews will need more practice in its use for this purpose, before becoming proficient in plotting and avoiding the worst areas.
		Training.
		During June a revision of the method of conducting Specialist Ground Training was introduced. This was done as it was felt that under the previous system, operational demands were seriously interrupting the training programme. The new system involves a method whereby the crew Captain is fully responsible for ensuring that each member of his crew makes full use of all facilities.
		As the use of the Liberator VIII became greater it was found that additional training was required. For example H2X Training for Navigators and Bomb Aimers, familiarization with K.II compensating Gunsight and Mk. 11D Gyro Sight for Air Gunners., a new fuel system for Flight Engineers, and a new flying drill for the whole crew. In addition to this, a Ship Recognition Course was introduced.
		Practice Bombing.
		Most bombing was calibration bombing and generally lining up the new aircraft. Results after initial calibration were, generally, good. Bomb Aimers became familiar with a new Bombing panel, which incorporated a few changes over the previous models. One new crew arrived from another Squadron, and were given instruction in the technique as carried out by this Squadron, both medium and low level.
		Gunnery.
		Further theoretical and practical training was given in K.11 and K.11D (mentioned above) to Air Gunners, and Flight Engineers on the Mid Upper Turret, also theory of Sighting. Zone training was held up due to an inadequate electrical supply, but a total of 16 hours was completed.
		H2X training of Navigators and Air Bombers commenced on 19th June. Lectures are given to teams, both individually and by groups. Due to insufficient power supply, it is only possible to use one trainer at a time Thus progress is not quite as rapid as might be expected. all crews should be fully trained by mid July. All teams, it is hoped, will be given on Screen Cross Country, and for the

¹ The record states "Liberator VII", but this should be "Liberator VIII" (as noted elsewhere in the record).

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		first 20 hours of airborne use, The Operators will be considered to be under training.
		The Syllabus of Ground Training is as follows:-
		1. Fundamentals of Radar.
		2. Explanation of Controls.
		3. Setting-up procedure.
		4. Bombing and the use of beacons.
		5. Scope interpretation.
		6. Navigational use, and operational procedure.
		7. Faults and remedies.
		Four hours on hands, mockups, practicing setting up and timing and familiarization with controls. Four hours on synthetic trainer practicing map reading.
		Air Sea Rescue.
		A revised ditching drill for Liberators was evolved. In accordance with this considerable interest was taken, and the new drill has been practiced at least twice by each crew.
		The introduction of the Liberator VIII with a new Flight Deck layout calls for a complete revision of present dinghy and parachute drill.
		Flying Times
		Operational 1161.50
		Training 181.50
		1343.00.
		Bombs Dropped.
		Bombs Mines
		88? x 1000 lb. G.P. 34 x 1000 lb. M.23.
		164 x 500 lb. M.C. 16 x 1000 lb. M56?.
		39 x 500 lb. G.P. 20 x 1000 lb. Mv.VII.
		74 x 250 lb. Yellow T.I. 70,000 lb.
		18 x 250 lb. Green T.I.
		320 x 260 lb. Fragmentation
		485 x 100 lb.
		8?8?9, 559? lbs.
		Total ?????????? 17???.13 Tons.
		(L.B. Ercolani.) Wing Commander, Commanding, No.159 Squadron, R.A.F.
		Part II. – Administration. June, 1945.
Digri.	4/5/45	General:
		An R.C.A.F. Officer visited the unit to give information to R.C.A.F. Personnel about the Canadian General Election.
		Temperature high - 112° in the shade. a Conference was held in the C.O's office to discuss plans for the move of the unit, in case one was contemplated in the near future.
	8/6/45	A new Establishment was received today – LWE/SEA/263B (Squadron) and LWE/SEA/552B (Servicing Echelon). Hitherto the Squadron had been working as a complete body to establishment no. LWE/SEA/263A dated 1/5/ and the Appendix "A" Note 2 to that Establishment had provided for the Special "C" Flight who have been working with this Squadron since 21/7/. The underlying principle of this scheme is that a Squadron shall consist only of aircrew and their aircraft. At whatever airfield the Squadron is located, there will also be another sister unit consisting of servicing and maintenance personnel who are experienced in maintaining the particular type of aircraft of the Squadron. This sister unit will be administered by the Station and will generally combine with similar units on the same Station to form a 'Pool' of maintenance personnel. It would appear, on the face of things, that a certain amount of Squadron 'Spirit' will be lost under the new scheme.
	12/6/45	An Accidents Committee Meeting was held today at 185 Wing Headquarters.
	17/6/45	A signal was received giving instructions to cancel all leave in Calcutta forthwith, on account of the accommodation difficulties occasioned by the move of 221 Group into Calcutta on rest leave. A severe dust storm was experienced at 17.00 hours.
	23/6/45	A lecture was given by S/Ldr. JM. Stroud, the Senior Canadian Officer on the unit, on the new

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		Policy of Reorganisation for the R.C.A.F. for the second Phase in the Pacific Theatre. The R.C.A.F. Public Relations Officer – F/Lt. E. McVity, Also paid a visit to the Squadron.
	25/6/45	No. 185 Wing, the controlling unit, have now received instructions regarding moving, and are therefore making the necessary preparations for same.
		The position regarding Clerks G.D. has long been unsatisfactory so far as their strength is concerned, and a letter giving the whole situation was forwarded to 185 Wing. The Clerks on the Squadron have for some months been working under heavy pressure due to severe depletion in their numbers. However, they have never been found lacking in response to the increased calls, though this has meant a continuous 10 hour day of work which has been accepted as one of the necessities of the demands of war in this theatre.
	27/6/45	A message of congratulation was received from the A.O.C. 231 Group on the accuracy of our Bombing in connection with Gun sites and Bridges, recently carried out by the Squadron.
	28/6/45	A marked change in the temperature has been noticed, it being very much cooler and more tolerable.
	30/6/45	The move of No. 185 Wing to R.A.F. Bilaspur took place today, the personnel of that unit moving in to with the exception of a Special Intelligence party of officers and 1 airmen, and a rear party of 1 officer and five airmen.
		Welfare:
		A big drive commenced on the 2nd regarding airmen's rations and messing. F/Lt. Foot and F/O. Drew who have recently taken over this responsibility are making a large scale effort to raise the standard generally all round. The new messing committee which has been formed will be meeting each week.
	4/6/45	An increase in the amount of mail was observed, after a lull of about a week or so during which very little had been received.
		National savings appear to be booming, and there is a rising interest in this scheme.
		The Soda Mineral Water Plant continued to function satisfactorily, although difficulty is still being experienced in obtaining the gas bottles.
		Aircrew personnel are being sent on a leave of 14 days during this hot season, which will break the strain of operations.
	16/6/45	Beer issued today. The allocation this month was 10 small bottles per man. The beer is of good quality and was popular with all.
	17/6/45	Welfare meeting was held and the following points were discussed.: Purchase of new sports kit; appointment of a new Sports Committee.
	18/6/45	Applications were received and chosen for the July allocation of the Home mid-tour leave.
	19/6/45	All forms of outdoor sport was today prohibited by the Medical Officer until further notice, owing to the extenuating weather conditions prevailing at the time.
	24/6/45	A Concert Party, hailing from No. 91 A.S.P., Khargpur, and sponsored by F/Lt. E.B. Thornton, a former Medical Officer of this unit, visited the Station and gave two showings which were very entertaining, and were enjoyed by all.
		Medical:
		A new Medical Officer – F/Lt. A. Ponder – from 84 Squadron, took over the medical charge on the 10th of this month, in place of F/Lt. Hackett, posted to 52 Squadron.
		There were 18 admissions of Ground Staff to Hospital this month and 8 aircrews, the diagnosis in the main being heat effects. 1 Ground staff contracted M.T. Malaria during the month, this happening whilst he was on detachment at Akyab. On the 10th of this month at the Indian B.T. Cooks from the Officers' Mess were sent down to the Station Sick Quarters to be examined in order to find out whether any of them were carriers of dysentery.
		Part III. – Personnel.
	12/6/45	Certain aircrew personnel from R.A.F. Salbani were today interviewed by the Commanding Officer as being prospective crews for this Squadron.
	14/6/45	A detachment of 25 Ground personnel proceeded to 352 M.U. Allanabad to assist in carrying out of acceptance checks for the new Liberator Mark VIII's which are destined for 159 Squadron.
	23/6/45	F/O. R.J. Daly assumed the duties of Assistant Adjutant.
	7/6/45	A consignment of 10 Cooks B.T. and 4 Lascars Enrolled Followers arrived ex No. 1 R.T.C. Lahore. These were a badly needed addition to the strength of the Squadron, and they were put on to immediate urgent duty.
	27/6/45	Visit of R.N.Z.A.F. Liaison Officer to the unit. This Officer is a Junior Commander in the W.A.C(I).

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		Commissioning: There were no commissions effected during the month.
		Special Movements:
		R.283186 F/Sgt. Spenard, J.A. A/Gnr. Proceeded ex India 11/6/45 – Medical.
		R.273987 F/Sgt. Taylor, M.R. A/Gnr. " " " 3/6/45 – Medical.
		1629491 A.C.I. Ryal, A.L. ACH/GD. " " " 27/6/45 – Medical.
		133280 F/Lt. G. Bettelley. A&SD(Int) " " " Home Leave.
		1122549 LAC. Robson, R. F.M.E. " " " 11/6/45 Tour ex.
		1180691 Cpl. Cox, W. ACH/GD. " " " 29/6/45 Tour ex.
		1717042 LAC. Aslett, A. Fitt. II.W. " " " 20/6/45 Compassionate Leave.
		620674 F/Sgt. Robinson, G.A. F/Eng. Proceeded Bombay on Transfer to RCAF, 2/6.
		145358 F/Lt. G.F. Brantingham GD(Nav.B) Left for Staff Nav. Course in U.K. Proceeding via A.S.T.R.S.
		54010 F/O. H. Jones. Tech(Arm.) Assumed duties of Armt. Officer.
		The following crews arrived during the month:
		F/O. G. Myles & Crew. from 355 Squadron. 21/6/45.
		F/L. C.A. Owens & Crew. from 231 Group. 23/6/45.
		F/O. K.J. Whitcutt & Crew. from 231 Group. 23/6/45.
		F/O. J. Davis & Crew. from 231 Group. 23/6/45.
		F/L. H.H. Marcou & Crew. from 356 Squadron. 20/6/45.
		Postings airmen:
		9 Armourers arrived ex U.K. on 9/6/45.
		7 Cooks arrived ex U.K. 9/6/45.
		Tour Expiry:
		One crew – P/O. Temple-Smith & Crew was reported tour expired by 400 hours., on 13/6/45. This is the first crew on the Squadron to complete 400 hours under the new operational tour of duty.
		Casualties:
		1608031 F/Sgt. Woodham P.E. F/Eng. wounded slightly 5/6/45. (See details at addenda following Part V.)
		Part IV. Honours & Awards.
		The following awards were announced in the London Gazette in connection with the King's Birthday Honours List, 1945.
		W/Cdr. L.B. Ercolani. D.S.O. GD(Pilot) 62270 M.I.D.
		F/Lt. H.J. Hulse. Tech (S.Radar) 48847 M.I.D.
		F/Lt. G. Bettelley. A&SD(Int) 133280 M.I.D.
		S/Ldr. E. Burchmore. Tech(Eng) 49361 M.B.E.
		Part V. General.
		The centralised water supply on the domestic site commenced to function today. There are two motor pumps which work at certain periods during each day and maintain a water level in the central water tank situated near the officers' Mess. This tank feeds all the smaller tanks by gravity, which in turn supply the bath houses and other water supplies.
		All billets are having reinforcement, in the way of upright beams, fixed inside the building. these upright are fixed on to the main roof cross beam and will prevent the roof from blowing off in heavy storms, or conversely will prevent the roof or walls from caving in. The roofs are also being covered with Indian Ruberoid as well as thatch.
		Addenda: to Part III. Personnel.
		Casualties:
		1608031 F/Sgt. Woodham. P.E. Flight Engineer, was serving as F/Eng. on Liberator aircraft EW173 "B", which was detailed for operations on 5th June 1945 in the Bangkok area. The target area was reached at approximately 16.30 hours and the Flight Engineer was station in the beam position in order to take photographs. Just after the second run over the target the aircraft was hit by several explosive shells, believed to be light A.A. which entered from the underpart of the aircraft, some exploding in the beam position, hitting F/Sgt. Woodham. He sustained injuries in both legs, and first aid was rendered. On return the aircraft landed at Alipore, Calcutta, and from there F/Sgt. Woodham was admitted to No. 12 B.G.H.
		Resume of Month's Work & Morale of Unit.

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		In spite of adverse weather during this month, high pressure operations were still maintained, crews picking their way through bad monsoon conditions for the most part of their trips. The high lights of the operations were, when on the 1st of June, a return visit was paid to Satahib Bay, and a co-ordinated attack was planned involving medium level, low level bombing and mining by this Squadron. The main target, a 3,000 ton Submarine Depot Ship the "Anthong", was sunk; a 2,000 ton Merchant Vessel sunk in 3 ½ minutes; and a direct hit obtained on a sloop, severely damaging it. The lesson learnt by this Operation was, that by the standard of medium level bombing now reached it was possible to hit and sink shipping.
		Later in the month a detachment of six aircraft was sent to Akyab for a Shipping Strike against a 10,000 ton tanker. Four direct hits were obtained from Medium level and the ship sunk. At the end of the month a low level attack was made on the Kanchanaburi Bridge; three spans were destroyed before the attack was finished, so the remaining aircraft bombed the by-pass bridge, destroying part of that also.
		The spirit and morale amongst the ground crews as a result of these successes was very high indeed; they showed very much to advantage at Akyab, where the conditions were rather grim. Maybe it was the bottle of beer per man that the Group Captain was able to arrange somehow, that helped!
		the coming Election did not seem to have much effect, in fact surprisingly little interest is shown. Personnel are now rather worried by the new Echelon Establishment, which takes the maintenance crews off the Squadron strength. In this country the Squadron Spirit takes the place of normal relaxations in more civilized parts, and the men are rather afraid that this scheme may somewhat spoil that.
		(L.G. Ercolani.) Wing Commander, Commanding, No.159 Squadron. R.A.F.