

159 Squadron

Place	Date	Summary of Events
		Compiled by A421941 F/O. S.J. Smith G.D.
Digri.	Nov. 1944.	This month has proved a successful one for the Squadron generally and from an operational point of view in particular. With improved weather conditions much work has been done which a month or two ago would have been impossible. A considerable area of the camp site has been cleared of unwanted vegetation and the ground has completely dried. Operational flights are now carried out regularly and good bombing and mining results have been obtained. A total of 141 sorties were flown comprising 87 bombing and 54 mining sorties The bombing targets included Makasan Rly. Workshops (Bangkok), Bansue Rly. Works (Bangkok), Ye Railway, Mergui Jetties, Great Cocos Is. Jetties, Martaban Jetties, Tavoi <sup>1</sup> , Bangkok Noi Rly. Mines were laid in the areas of Bangkok, Moulmein, Sittaing, Tavoy, Goh Sichang & Penang. Some training has been carried out on the Squadron including low-level dive bombing day & night and circuits and landings.
		The Commanding Officer, Wing Commander J. Blackburn D.S.O., D.F.C. and Bar was awarded a bar to his D.S.O. and the following Message was received from the Air Officer Commanding S.A.F.:-
		"My very heartiest congratulations on the award of a bar to your D.S.O. which you so richly deserve. Very best of luck in the future."
Digri.	1.11.44.	Message was received from the Commander-in-Chief of Eastern Fleet sending his congratulations on the successful long-range mine-laying at Penang carried out last month.
	2.11.44.	At a general Court Martial held at B.H.Q. R.A.F. Calcutta, 1290312 W/O. W.M. Davey of 159 Squadron was placed on 3 charges under Section 40 A.F. Act in that he:-
		1. At Calcutta on 6th July 1944 improperly caused injury to himself by cutting his right wrist with a razor blade."
		2. At Calcutta on 7th July 1944 improperly caused injury to himself by cutting his left wrist."
		3. At Calcutta on 7th July 1944, having entered the residence of Mrs. D.M. Clarke at No.1 Marina Gardens, improperly damaged furniture therein by breaking it, and personal clothing the property of the said Mrs. Clark by throwing it from a window into the garden."
		The accused was found guilty of the first and second charges and guilty of the third charge with the exception of the words "from a window".
		He was sentenced to be reduced to the ranks and undergo detention for 28 days.
	2.11.44.	A letter of appreciation was received from the Commanding General U.S. Army Air Forces, General Arnold, on the mine laying operation at Penang.
	6.11.44.	Flight Engineers' Conference was held at 231 Group attended by Sgt. Gilbert G.R. The duties of flight engineers on Squadrons were laid down on the assumption that such engineers would be kept in the crews in this Command.
	7.11.44.	Squadron Leader R.A. Robertson, represented the Commanding Officer at an award of decorations held at 231 Group.
		F/Lt. Ferguson R.C.A.F. Liaison Officer and S/Ldr. Lynch R.C.A.F. padre visited the Unit and interviewed all available R.C.A.F. personnel.
	11.11.44.	Liberator V. B.Z.939 which took off at 15.23 hrs on 10.11.44. on special operation in Rangoon-Moulmein-Mergui area reported missing. No message was received from the aircraft and no information available. The crew consisted of: 153104 F/O. Underhill J.W. (Capt.), 1493989 F/S. L.J. Coles (2/P), 1493958 F/S. Adams K. (Nav.B), 1171383 Sgt. Holt J.H. (F/E), 1210078 F/Sgt. Watson R. (Wop/AG), 1398784 Sgt. Ayres A.C. (WOP/AG), 1581255 Sgt. Jones T.J. (WOP/AG), 1389705 Sgt. Evans A.V. (WOP/AG), 1058886 F/Sgt. Amber E.E. (WOP/AIR).
	12.11.44.	Liberator VI. K.H.159 "G" missing not returned from mine-laying operation in Salween River. No message was received from the aircraft but over the target area

<sup>1</sup> (sic)

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		other crews saw light A.A. fire followed by an explosion in the air which they believed could be an aircraft. The crew consisted of the following:-
		J24282 F/O. Johnson J.B. (Capt.), J27619 F/O. Hardy D.R. (2/P), 1495867 Sgt. Hall J. (Nav), 1394253 F/S. Baker D.H. (Nav), 1393437 F/S. Gurr D.C. (Wop/Air), 1397212 Sgt. Brockman P.J.F. (F/E), 1803437 F/S. Whiteley M.J. (A.G.).
		F/O. F.C. Webster (R.C.A.F.) ex 99 Squadron took over duties of Bombing Leader from F/S. Reid B. who became tour expired and has been posted from the Unit.
	13.11.44.	A signal was received notifying that 3 members of a crew of 8 missing in Liberator B.Z.992 "E" are held as prisoners of war. The information has taken 38 days to reach the Squadron assuming that they were captured immediately. No mention was made of the other 5 members of the crew. Those held in enemy hands are:-
		Aus.407291 F/O. Hocking R.J. (R.A.A.F.), 1318896 F/Sgt. Derrick. R.1803261 Sgt. Rutter T.W. (R.C.A.F.).
	15.11.44.	F/O. J. Gordon assumed the duties of Signals Leader in place of F/Lt. W. McCready who became tour expired and was posted from the Unit.
	16.11.44.	Notification was received that a former member of the Squadron F/Sgt. Kirkness W.A. had been awarded the D.F.M.
	23.11.44.	Three members of "C" Flight (Special Flight) were awarded the D.F.C. The officers are:- F/Lt. J.W. Bradley, F/Lt. D. O'Connor, and F/O. A.J. Pritchard.
	26.11.44.	Another long-range operation was undertaken to mine Penang harbour. This time it did not prove so successful as the first trip owing to infavourable weather conditions in the target area.
	27.11.44.	Message received from the A.O.C. congratulating crews who reached the target and expressing regret for appalling weather conditions met en-route.
	28.11.44.	F/Lt. S. Hutchison and P/O. R. Woolfe, public relations officers for the R.A.A.F. visited the unit and interviewed R.A.A.F. personnel. Photographs were also taken including one of those who participated in the first Penang Trip.
		A District Court Martial was held at H.Q. 185 Wing for the purpose of trying 337572 T/Cpl. W.O. Steedman, 159 Squadron. Findings will not be available till a future date.
		Welfare Notes.
		There was a general meeting held in the Airmen's Canteen on the 14th November and the large agenda was successfully dealt with. A new welfare committee was formed and Cpl. A. Laughton was appointed Secretary of the Welfare and P.S.I. Committee. the new Welfare Officer F/O Barrett was introduced by his predecessor F/O. Powell.
		It was decided that a new recreation room be provided and this work is at present in progress. The new one will provide greater facilities for reading, writing and indoor recreation such as table tennis and darts It was also decided to improve the airmen's mess by painting, decorating and improving the lighting.
		There is now a library in operation for the airmen's use and it shows promise of improving and growing.
		The P.S.I. funds are in particularly good state having improve considerably over the last three months and a useful sum will be available for expenses entailed by the improvements to be carried out.
		A band and concert party is already in being and rehearsals are progressing with the view to putting on a show at Christmas.
		In addition to the Airmen's Mess, both the Sergeants' and Officers' Messes have been improved by painting and decorating and the covering of the floors with matting. This work is not quite complete but a vast improvement is evident.
		Sports Notes.
		Football.
		Interest is very keen and at the close of the month we still have 8 teams going strong. Through the month league matches had to be postponed to allow teams to compete for the station cup. New boots have been purchased and fresh supplies of equipment are expected this coming month.
		Hockey.
		Continues to be very popular and with some new kit received from Welfare it has been

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		possible to play two matches per night on several occasions. A complete round of the league has been played and the standard of performance has increased enormously.
		Cricket.
		Is being played regularly now on the Squadron and the unit has been represented by teams playing at Salboni.
		Boxing.
		Has been started and at present the Wing Gymnasium is being used for "workouts". It is intended to hold a tournament at the commencement of Christmas festivities.
		Sport on the Squadron is still very much on the up-grade and a great deal of enthusiasm is evident.
		Medical Notes.
		There has been a satisfactory decrease in the numbers admitted to hospital or sick quarters. This is partly seasonable and in part due to a fall in the number of malaria cases. These have decreased from 15 last month to 3 this month which indicates that the lesson of personal protection has probably been learnt and applied by ground crew working on aircraft at night. This has been to some extent counter-balanced by a rise in the aircrew figures from 6 to 11 some of which were exposed to risk off the camp, e.g. in Calcutta where malaria is now epidemic within the incubation period of the disease.
		There have been two cases of venereal disease amongst European personnel during the month. One was possibly a relapse though it may well have been a fresh infection. The other is of interest as being the first case from this unit treated with penicillin. He was infected off the camp whilst in transit and was back to duty within 10 days of admission to hospital. Two tea hawkers and one or two bearers have also been discovered to be infected.
		The incidence of skin disease has improved and fewer cases of tinea are being seen. It is hoped that the new dhobi arrangements will lead to a maintenance of this improvement. Of the seven cases of dysentery three were amoebic. Only two of the cases of bacillary dysentery were definitely contracted on the camp.
		Only one injury of a total of 6 is attributable to games. The others were all sustained at work and none were of a serious nature.
		The average daily sick aircrew 7.3, ground staff 9 giving a total of 16.3. There have been no epidemics of disease for the month and the health of the Squadron remains satisfactory. Sick parades again average about 2% of the strength.
		Daily inspection of fruit and tea hawkers and barbers is still carried out and it is considered that a fair standard of hygiene for such personnel is now maintained.
		As an experiment Caffeine tablets were issued to all crews on one exceptionally prolonged operation and a report was called for. A moderate percentage of aircrew used these tablets as instructed and of these the large majority reported satisfactory results. As a consequence it is proposed to make caffeine available for those who wish to collect it before trips where it is considered that it might be useful so long as stocks can be obtained.
		Strength of the Unit at the end of the month was:-
		Service.                      Officers.                      Other Ranks.
		R.A.F.                              55                              690
		R.A.A.F.                            10                              25
		R.C.A.F.                            5                                16
		R.N.Z.A.F.                        2                                --
		S.A.A.F.                            1                                --
		I.A.F.                                1                                5
		Others.                            --                                60
		(J. Blackburn)
		Wing Commander Commanding
		No.159 Squadron, R.A.F.