

April 1945 Form 540

203 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
			I – Operations.
			April has been an active and successful month from every point of view. The Squadron has got well into its stride on anti-shipping work, and flew a total of 194 ½ hours (15 sorties) against enemy shipping targets during the period.
			On these sorties the following results have been obtained:-
			1 Submarine Chaser (PC-7) destroyed.
			1 300 ton Coaster (Agata Maru) destroyed.
			1 400 ton Freighter probably destroyed.
			1 L.C. (I) damaged.
			1 Wooden Coaster (Sugar Dog) Damaged.
			1 Wooden Coaster (Sugar Dog) Probably damaged.
			these are in addition to the attacks carried out at Oelehleh last month which resulted in :-
			1 200 ton Coaster destroyed.
			2 Wooden Coasters probably destroyed.
			3 Wooden Coasters damaged.
			This makes a total to date of 3 ships destroyed, 3 probably destroyed and 5 damaged.
			Non-Operational Flying. totalled 244 ½ hours. This is inclusive of semi-operational flying, such as operational transit flights to Cuttack on detachment and experimental supply dropping in Ceylon.
			Technical
			Range Trial. Instructions were received to prepare an aircraft with a view to carrying an operational load of 4000 lbs and a round trip of 2400 miles.
			The following equipment has been removed:-
			(1) Mid-upper turret.
			(2) Beam guns and mountings
			(3) Tail turret ammunition in excess of 500 x .303 or 250 x .5 per gun.
			(4) All pyrotechnics.
			(5) Oxygen system.
			(6) Spare transmitter and receiver, and other equipment as shown in Appendix.
			Total weight removed amounted to 2738 lbs.
			On the trial flight the aircraft (flown by F/Lt. W. A. McKay) was airborne for 17 hours and covered a track of 2350 N.M. (2511 air miles) landing with 350 gals. remaining. For full details see Appendix A.
			Serviceability
			during the first week aircraft strength was twelve and serviceability averaged 85%. Three aircraft were damaged during the operation of April 11th and serviceability fell to 40%, improving later to 60%. No immediate replacement aircraft were available, and aircraft strength thereafter remained at 9.
			Cuttack Detachment.
Cuttack	26 April		An operational detachment of six aircraft was despatched to Cuttack, together with 42 groundcrew. The captains were S/L. Mosher, F/L MacDonald, F/L Elmes, F/L. Russell, P/O. Lyons and P/O. Law.
			Transit flights were flown as patrols of the shipping lanes.
			One additional aircraft flew up with personnel and returned the following day.
			No operations were carried out by the Detachment before the end of the month.
			Army Co-operation.
Minneriya			Five experimental supply drops were carried out by Liberators after preliminary

			reconnaissance of the area. The crews engaged were F/L. McKay (twice) P/O. Law, F/L Waterton and W/O Hudson.
Sigiriya	28th April		The Squadron's Harvard, flown by F/L. Brown, was landed at Sigiriya to test a flare path laid by the Ghurka Regiment.
Kankesanturai	7 April		Three aircraft on anti-shipping sweep of Andaman Islands from first light, the patrol being from South to North up the East Coast, individual aircraft being briefed to search for ships possibly lying up in Stewart Sound and Port Cornwallis.
			F/O. McKay sighted a coaster of approx. 500 tons apparently ready to put out from Port Blair, but in view of the concentrated defence known to exist at the harbour the area was avoided in accordance with instructions. Thorough investigation of Port Cornwallis revealed nothing, and bombs were dropped on Table Island where some new buildings were seen, which appeared to be military huts or stores. No hits were observed.
			P/O. Law investigated Stewart Sound, and attacked a heavily camouflaged vessel which was thought at the time to be a native craft. As this was not considered an important target four bombs only were dropped, which were near misses, and the other aircraft were not called up. subsequent photographic interpretation assessed this ship as a Landing Craft.
			The third aircraft (F/L. Ensom) made no sightings. No opposition was encountered.
	8 April		P.R. having revealed the presence of a small naval patrol craft near the Western entrance to Nancowry harbour, and a wooden coaster lying up just inside the harbour, but clear of the defended area, three aircraft were despatched on a first light strike, with the Naval Vessel as the primary target.
			As second probable, the primary target was found to have left, but all three aircraft made attacks on the secondary target. This ship was so positioned as to make a low level attack extremely difficult. It was close inshore under the trees, and the ground rose up steeply from the shore with tall trees up to 150 ft. All aircraft accordingly had to pull up sharply during their bombing runs, thereby upsetting the aim. The tendency was to overshoot with bombs, but many strikes were claimed by the gunners, which must have inflicted considerable damage.
			Whilst leaving the target area the crew of W/O Hudson's aircraft sighted other ships lying up beside the N.E. tip of Matchall Island. Again the position would have been a difficult one in which to attack. Prolonged discussion as to the exact position of this sighting occupied the crew during the early part of their homeward trip. By the time a decision was arrived at, further investigation was impracticable.
	11 April		Six crews were briefed to search for and attack an enemy convoy comprising an M/V of 300 tons and an escorting submarine chaser, reported by P.R. to have left Port Blair and to be proceeding South Eastwards to the East of the Nicobar Islands. The aircraft commenced their patrol at first light from position 020N 9320E flying at 200 ft. on a course of 160°. Weather was fair and visibility good F/L. Ensom was the first to sight the ships at 0900N 9340E and attacked the M/V out of the sun flying at a very low height. The bombs are thought to have straddled the after part of the ship, which was afterwards seen to be on fire at the stern. In making the attack the nose of the aircraft struck the mainmast and the navigator was injured in the face by splinters from the bombing panel. The oil tank of No. 1 engine was also damaged during the attack, and the No. 1 airscrew was feathered. The aircraft was able to gain height, but to reduce petrol consumption a quantity of equipment was jettisoned. A/C landed at China Bay.
			The second aircraft (W/O Hudson) attacked the M/V scoring a direct hit amidships and causing it to sink shortly after. The aircraft was damaged by A.A.
			The third aircraft (F/O JcKay) sighted the M/V in the act of sinking, and the E/V, a large submarine Chaser of the P.C.1 class manoeuvring in the area.
			This was heavily armed with 20 m.m. A.A. guns, with which it opened fire at extreme range. The aircraft attacked but on the first run the bomb doors were not opened. The ship was however seen to be set on fire at the stern by the aircraft's

			M.G. Fire. A second run was mad, and the bombs fell very close to the stern of the ship, which was taking violent evasive action. On this run the aircraft was hit repeatedly, but no one was injured. In landing at K.K.S. the starboard tyre collapsed, but the pilot maintained control.
			The fourth aircraft (W/Cdr Fox) found the E/V on fire, and attacked out of the sun. The bombs straddled the bow of the ship and one was seen to burst on the bows and debris to be flung into the air. The aircraft then circled to take photographs, and survivors from the M/S were seen in the water.
			The last aircraft to attack was P/O Law's, they found the E/V describing a circular course. This aircraft made two attacks with four bombs out of the sun. The first bombing run straddled the stern, scoring a hit on the rear gun position, and causing an explosion in the ship. On the second run the ship was hit again, and further fires started. The ship was last seen stationary and down by the stern.
			The remaining aircraft (F/L Ftcher) misinterpreted the positions given in the sighting reports and continued its patrol to the South of Great Nicobar Island, with the compass unserviceable, no sighting was made.
			The Navy have confirmed the sinking of both ships and 69 survivors have been picked up.
K.K.S.	17th April		Three aircraft took off at midnight for a first light strike on a Sugar Dog reported to be beached at India Point at the Western entrance to Nancowry Harbour.
			F/L Sandall sighted the ship in this position during his run in, and it was seen to be close inshore and well camouflaged. The position of the ship made low level attack difficult and the bombs overshot, but M.G. strikes were obtained on two attacking runs. 400 miles from base No. 2 engine of this aircraft began to vibrate, and was feathered.
			The aircraft returned safely on three engines.
			F/L Fletcher, did not see the Sugar Dog on his run in. Whilst over the target he sighted a 400 ft. Freighter (Fox Tare Dog) in Spiteful Bay and made a successful attack with bombs and guns. One bomb burst on the stern and one amidships, and the ship was left enveloped in smoke. HAA., LAA. and M.G. fire was encountered from the shore, and cannon and M.G. fire from the ship, but the aircraft was not hit.
			The third aircraft (P/O Lyons) also failed to locate the briefed target, probably owing to the bad weather conditions over the target area. The aircraft overshot India Point and ran into HAA fire near Grand Harbour.
			the aircraft returned fire with all guns, and successfully silenced the enemy position. After continuing unsuccessful attempts to locate the target the aircraft returned to Base.
			II Administration
			Health. Owing to the high temperatures and humidity experienced during the month, the incidence of skin infections was increased.
			In other respects the general health of the Squadron remained unchanged.
			Entertainment. The standard of films at the Station Cinema shows some improvement. The "Listener's Circle" weekly classical record programmes, continued to be well attended.
			Sport. The nightly football matches have continued to provide interest and entertainment to a large attendance. An inter-section league was started after completion of the Knock out Competition.
			Regular cricket has also been played on a new concrete wicket. Hockey has been losing it's attraction owing to the roughness of the pitch. A grant from the Viceroy's Fund has been applied for in order to improve the ground.
			Sea bathing continues daily, and non swimmers have been receiving instruction.
			III Personnel
			A number of the aircrews which joined the Squadron at the time of its conversion to Wellingtons, and transfer to India from the Middle East in November, 1943, are

			now tour expired and awaiting postings.
			Replacements are arriving as listed below.
			F/L. Botterill? (Engineer Officer) left for Kolar after tow years with the Squadron, including service in the desert.
			The following movements took place during the month.
			To The Unit.
			F/O. (A/F/L) J. H. McLaren (47987) Tech (E) posted from No. 1 S of T.T. wef 21.3.45.
			F/O. T. Webster (164936) G. D. posted from 160 Squadron wef 13.3.45
			P/O. A. V. MacDonald (J.47177) G.D. (S) " " " "
			P/O. V. L. Johnson (J.47867) G.D. (S) " " " "
			P/O. W. A. Steel (J.45963) G.D. (NAV.B) " " " "
			1340336 F/S. Young, D.C. WOM/AIR " " " "
			R.205319 F/S. Ross, D. M. Pilot " " " "
			R.231447 Sgt. Morrison, J. C. A/G. " " " "
			R.214064 Sgt. Burrows, J. G. A/G. " " " "
			943267 Sgt. Devine, T. W. F/E. " " " "
			1622766 Sgt. Bradley, B. WOP/AIR " " " "
			F/O. E. H. Cocks (A.421167) G.D. posted from U.K. wef. 26.3.45.
			P/O. D. K. Taylor (J.45953) G.D. (NAV.B) " " " "
			R.205234 F/S. C. B. Jackson Pilot " " " "
			R.218819 F/S. G. H. Betteridge WOP/AIR " " " "
			949651 Sgt. G. S. Preston F/E. " " " "
			R.212600 Sgt. H. E. Read WOP/AIR " " " "
			R.276140 Sgt. R. C. Taylor " " " "
			578798 Sgt. R. J. Pavey WOM/AIR " " " "
			R.68077 Sgt. C. L. Brennan A/G. " " " "
			R.71206 Sgt. T. P. Edwards A/G. posted from R.A.F. Station Poona wef 20.4.45
			F/L. R. J. Brown (J.5805) G.D. posted from R.A.F. Station Poona wef 10.4.45
			F/O. C. G. Ziebarth (164948) G.D. " " " " " " " "
			P/O. G. C. Sollows (J.48155) G.D.(S) " " " " " " " "
			P/O. J. H. Goodyear (J.46511) G.D.(NAV.B) " " " " " " " "
			P/O. J. W. Alexander (J.48156) G.D.(S) " " " " " " " "
			578756 Sgt. Chambers, A. G. WOM/AIR " " " " " " " "
			1825309 Sgt. Bernard, W. F/E. " " " " " " " "
			Sgt. R. K. Grainger (1250280) A/G. " " " " " " " "
			1320334 Sgt. F. R. Marchant A/G. " " " " " " " "
			1549462 Sgt. C. Seddon WOP/AIR " " " " " " " "
			F/L. C. H? Elmes (A.413842) G.D. posted from Canada wef 19.3.45.
			F/O. J. U? Prosser (164532) G.D. " " " " " " " "
			P/O. P. Hill (164858) G.D.(NAV.B) " " " " " " " "
			P/O. D. J. C?oinner (J.46190) G.D.(G) " " " " " " " "
			A.430973 Sgt. K. T. Cook WOP/AIR " " " " " " " "
			A.442421 Sgt. K. S? Francis WOP/AIR " " " " " " " "
			A.435624 Sgt. C. H. Hamilton " " " " " " " "
			R.123323 Sgt. R. J. Brown A/G. " " " " " " " "
			1867412 Sgt. J. F. Churchill F/E. posted from U.K. wef 16.3.45.
			P/O. R. G? Upton (190873) G.D.(S) posted from U.K. wef 19.3.45.
			F/L. K. R. MacDonald (J.8956) G.D. posted from U.K. wef 17.3.45.
			P/O. E. R. DeProfio (J.47615) G.D.(S) " " " " " " " "
			R.198404 F/S. H. E. Bassford Pilot " " " " " " " "
			1601632 Sgt. E. J. Goddard NAV.B. " " " " " " " "
			1873070 Sgt. R. C. Fowler. F/E. " " " " " " " "
			R.148679 Sgt. E. J. Ford WOP/AIR " " " " " " " "

		R.269200 Sgt. G. E. Mundrick WOP/AIR " " " " "
		578771 Sgt. D. W. Sacree WOP/AIR " " " " "
		R.280773 Sgt. A. N. Langille A/G. " " " " "
		R.288049 Sgt. D. M. Balfour A/G. " " " " "
		1282215 F/S. W. D. Howard. Pilot posted from 222 Group Unit wef 16.4.45
		1584025 Sgt. D. F. Pantry " " " " " " " "
		1603146 P. W. Burton ¹ " " " " " " " "
		From the Unit
		F/L. N. O. Hobbs. (NZ.40168) G.D. posted to H.Q. RAF Base Colombo wef 1.5.45 (pending repat)
		F/L. C. Wateerton ² (J.8171) G.D. posted to HQ, ACSEA. Comm. Sqdn. wef. 28.4.45
		F/L. R. H. Fox. (A.410884) G.D.(S) posted to HQ, ACSEA. Comm. Sqdn. wef. 14.4.45
		1231229 W/O. N. Ellison. Pilot. Posted to 111O.T.U. Nassau, wef 16.4.45.
		1146787 W/O. R. J. Orr. WOP/AIR. posted to Minneriya wef 4.4.45.
		1394792 W/O. L. D. DePinna " " " " " " "
		1320312 F/S. J. Norman " " " Kolar wef 21.3.45
		F/L. G. T. Botterill (13939) Tech(E) posted to S.H.Q. Kolar wef 21.2.45
		IV General
		The Shipping Strikes flown by the Squadron continue to be very Successful. The 'bag is rising rapidly, which must be a disturbing fact for the enemy, who realizing his weakness in ?????????? the sea in this theatre ??????????to these small ?????????? ships to supply the Andaman & Nicobar Chains of Islands.
		The morale of the Squadron is high, which is good ?????????????????? many new crews replacing the operationally toru expired crews. This replacement is proceeding satisfactorily, but the shortage of aircraft during this month restricted the amount of pro????? instruction in the air that could be given to the replacement Crews.
		The posting of F/L. G. T. Botterill from the Squadron, although necessary from a service point of view, is a great loss to the Engineering Side of Squadron life. During his long stay he maintained a very high Standard of Serviceability & gave of his best all the time.
		{note – General section is handwritten and very hard to read}
		Commanding
		203 Squadron

¹ No rank given.

² Note spelt Wateerton in record.