

August 1945 Form 540

203 Squadron, Cocos Island Detachment

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
Cocos	2nd Aug		F/Lt. St. John carried out unarmed reconnaissance of the Sunda Straits area without making any sightings of interest. Off the coast of Java two enemy aircraft approached, a Pet and a Val. The Val made as if to attack, but was driven off by fire from the mid-upper and tail gunners.
	4th Aug		S/Ldr. Fletcher flew and unarmed reconnaissance of the Sunda Straits and coastwise to Emmahaven. Shipping was sighted in the harbour at Benkoelen. North of Benkoelen two coasters escorted by a submarine-chaser were seen in convoy. The E/V opened fire with cannon at 2 miles range ineffectively. Engine failure occurred on the return track, but the aircraft reached base safely. The M/V previously attacked at Emmahaven was not seen, owing to poor visibility.
	4th Aug		F/Lt. MacDonald carried out a shipping strike on Tjilatjap Harbour (Java), in company with two Liberators of 321 Squadron. Attack was made on a 200 ft. Ship in the docks, scoring near misses with 250 lb. bombs.
	7th Aug		S/Ldr. Fletcher carried out a photographic reconnaissance of Kebatu Island in the Java sea (0348S 108.02E). Vertical and oblique photos were taken from 2,000' and 200'. The only sign of life was a small sailing boat on the west side of the Island. An attack was made on a motor launch at Thwartway Island in the absence of larger targets, but bombs overshot. Photographs were also taken at Welkomst Bay (0650S 105.25E) with a view to its employment as a ditching position.
	10th Aug		Five more aircraft were detached on this date, flying down by night.
	11th Aug		F/Lt. St. John was briefed to take off on reconnaissance of the Sunda Straits, but his aircraft and the reserve aircraft were both made unserviceable by heavy rain, and the sortie was cancelled.
	12th Aug		F/O. Webster when taking off for a patrol of the Sunda Straits and northward to Banka Strait at 0100 hrs. blew 3 cylinders of no. 3 engine, when 200 yds. down the runway. He was airborne at 0430 in another aircraft. A convoy of 3 medium, and 2 small M/Vs. and an escort was sighted at the entrance to the Banka Strait. Returning southwards, a 4,000 ton tanker was sighted, escorted by 2 submarine chaser E/Cs. A low-level attack was made on the tanker, but owing to an error in crew drill the bomb doors were not opened, and the attack was abortive. There was no return fire from the tanker, but some inaccurate MAA fire from the E/Vs.
	13th Aug		F/O. Law and F/O. Tetlock were airborne at 0210 hrs. on an anti-shipping sweep of the Sunda Straits to attack this tanker. Failing this, the convoy reported in the Banka Straits was to be attacked. The intention was to rendezvous at 0610S 104.20E, and carry out a combined attack, and four aircraft were detailed; but F/O. Rau's aircraft was unserviceable, and the captain of the 321 Squadron aircraft went sick. F/O. Tetlock searched in the rendezvous position but made no rendezvous contact with F/O. Law, finding his W/T. transmitter unserviceable decided to return to base. F/O. Law had apparently flown on, for at 0810 hrs. he reported sighting 2 M/Vs. and 2 E/Vs. in position 0549S 106.00E, and that 1 M/V had been attacked. 3 minutes he transmitted a S.O.S. His attack report having been prefixed O-A, it is assumed that he was attacked by an enemy fighter, sustaining damage. A second S.O.S. was transmitted from a position over Sumatra (0545S 105.45E) at 0829. His last signal was made 3 minutes later, and indicated his intention to make for the ditching position in Welkohst Bay. An A.S.R. Catalina covering the operation

			searched this position without result, but reported an E/V. lying to the north of the Bay. There is some hop that the aircraft may have force landed on Sumatra, or ditched near the coast. The crew had at least fifteen minutes to prepare for ditching or to bale out.
	14th Aug		A.S.R. searches were flown by Liberators of 3321 and 356 Squadrons, and by F/O. Webster, but there was nothing to report. A Catalina also patrolled the Sunda Strait for rescue work in the event of a sighting.
	15th Aug		A.S.R. searches continued by Liberators and Catalinas, unsuccessfully, S/Ldr. Fletcher investigated a flashing light on a small island in the Strait, but could not distinguish any signal.
	16th Aug		Searches were continued by 684 Squadron Mosquitoes, still without result.
			Note:
			On 23rd Sept. a Liberator of 321 (Dutch) Squadron landed at Palembang where F/Sgt. Miners, the Flight Engineer from the missing aircraft, was encountered. F/Sgt. Miners reported that their aircraft had been badly damaged by flak during the attack, when the navigator was killed. The aircraft ditched in shallow water of Sebeski Island 0557S 105.28E and five survivors were taken to Palembang the following day. The remainder of the crew were believed killed in the crash.
			Wing Commander Commanding
			No. 203 Squadron, R.A.F.