

March 1946 Form 540

203 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
Kankasanturai			Operations
			March proved to be the heaviest month for flying since the end of the Japanese War, nearly 500 hours were flown in all. Of these 200 were flown on the eight trips to the Cocos made by the Squadron.
			Four flights were made to Santa Cruz with release and repart. personnel, and in addition six other aircraft landed at Santa Cruz on their way to northern India.
			Four new Mk.8 Liberators were received by the Squadron, and three of the old Mk.6's flown up to India for disposal. Thirteen Mk.8 aircraft are now available on the Squadron, one only of the Mk.6's remaining.
			The second Australia Flight was completed by F/L. A. Bowler. Leaving KKS on 4th. March, he flew via Negombo and the Cocos to arrive at Perth, Australia, on 11th. March. From here the aircraft was flown to Sydney, covering the entire breadth of the continent in a W to E direction, and arriving on 13th. March. The return flight was made over the same route, landing at KKS on 25th. March.
			On 21st. March news was received of a Lancastrian aircraft of the Quantas Airlines missing between Ceylon and the Cocos Islands. Three flights were laid on by the Squadron to assist in the search, further patrols being made from the Cocos by the aircraft on arrival. The search was abandoned by all assisting units on 30th. March, no contacts having been made.
			Flying Times.
			KKS to Cocos 196 hrs. 50 mins. " " Santa Cruz 40 hrs. 40 mins. " " Chakeri – Cawnpore – Chaklala 93 hrs. 30 mins. " " Madras 6 hrs. 45 mins. Australia Flight 68 hrs. 45 mins.
			Non-Operational.
			No navigation exercises were carried out during the month, night circuits and landings were carried out by two crews.
			Technical.
			Flying during the month was mainly composed of trips to the Cocos, Repat runs to Santa Cruz, a few trips to Northern India for the collection of spares, and one to Australia. Total flying times – 500 hrs., higher than for some time. Four new Mk.8 Liberators were received, and three of the old Mk.6's disposed of. Only one Mk.6 is now left, BZ991. This aircraft was made serviceable and one trip to Santa Cruz with repats. On its return and after refuelling, a leak was found in vicinity of the centre section. In view of this the tanks were partially drained, the leaks stopped and the ground crews packed up. The same evening it was reported that the tanks had started leaking again very badly. Inspection revealed that petrol was raining out of the centre section, this was collected in tins as it ran out and emptied into 50 gallon drums. It was estimated that the petrol was leaking at a rate of 7 gallons a minute. Tanks were later removed and it was found that No.1 Port inboard fuel cell had fractured around the booster pump attachment flange. The aircraft is at present awaiting fitment of a new fuel cell.
			Man power during the month remained pretty consistent, release group 37 has now been promulgated and will shortly relieve us of several key men and N.C.O.'s. Production for the month was 6 minor inspections, 3 acceptance checks, and 3 engine changes.
			Aircraft F (KL517), appears to have had a hard time during the month.

		<p>Early in the month bearing metal was found in the filters of Nos. 2 and 4 engines. Filters were cleaned and engines ground run, it was decided to change NO. 4 engine as further deposits were obtained. Aircraft was put on Minor inspection and engine changed. After Minor, air test was carried out, during which starboard dinghy hatch flew off. This caused damage to W.T. aerals and to starboard tailplane. These are now under repair. On checking after flight more bearing metal was found in filters of No. 2 engine and that had to be changed. Aircraft C, KL559 on Minor inspection was found to have bearing metal in filters of No. 4 engine. This had to be changed. Apart from engine changes, there were no other serious snags.</p>
		<p>A further batch of oil on being checked during the month was found to have water in it. This has been condemned, and new supplies are at present awaited. This is holding up the clearing of aircraft off Minor inspections.</p>
		<p>The Squadron Harvard has at last become serviceable. Parts were finally obtained by despatching someone to Colombo to search around all units.</p>
		Administration.
		<p>March was a month of numerous departures of well-known squadron personalities. Most notable was that of S/Ldr. D. A. Stewart, the "A" Flight Commander, who returned home on release. A farewell exhibition of his notorious skill at rope-swinging and hypnotism was made on the night of 28th. March. During his period of duty with the squadron, no ENSA party missed at least one joke at the expense of his world famous moustaches. Both of the Flight Commanders at the end of the Japanese War have now returned home.</p>
		<p>Other departures included those of two well-known skippers, F/L. K. Varlow, and F/Lt. A. Bowler, also F/O. R. Harris, one time Mess Secretary, who had been with the squadron for 10 months, and had been standing by for Class "B" release (Police) since July 1945. Releases at the end of the month had reached Group 36 for officers, and 38 for Aircrew N.C.O's.</p>
		<p>F/L. J. Wright, DFC and Bar, Squadron "A" Flight Commander, was awarded the AFC on the January Honours List.</p>
		<p>The numerous releases during the month compelled more than team to withdraw from the "A" Soccer League. However the remaining players have shown enthusiasm for the continuance of fixtures, and one attractive match is being placed every evening. Hockey fixtures continue steadily.</p>
		Squadron Strength.
		Officers 82
		Senior NCO's 163
		O.R.'s 7
		Medical.
		<p>General health continues to be very good. The case of smallpox which occurred last month has now been finally diagnosed as chickenpox and that case was the total of infectious diseases for the month.</p>
		<p>There has been a considerable drop in the number of skin diseases sufficiently bad for admission to S.S.Q. The sick-parade at an average of about 40 a day with a daily fluctuation of 10 to 15.</p>
		Personnel & Movements.
		Releases -
	6/3/46	F/L. R. Lassiter, 129401, Nav/B. and F/L. R. Prudhoe, 120586. Nav/B.
	9/3/46	F/O. S. R. Stevens, 165467, Nav/B.
	29/3/46	S/Ldr. D. A. Stewart, 41220, Pilot. F/L. K. Varlow, 152594, Pilot. F/L. A. Bowler, 127180, Pilot., F/O. R. Harris, 164075, Nav/B. F/O. D. T. White, 183062, Wop., F/O. (A/F/L.) W. R. Williams, 184754, F/E.

			Two new skippers arrived --- F/L. A. K. Crawshaw, 131095., F/O. J. H. Parnell, 197549.
			Casualties.
			There were no casualties this month
			W/Cdr.
			O.C. No. 203 Squadron, R.A.F.