

December 1944 Form 540

203 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
			I. Introductory
Madura			After almost three months spent in moving and conversion, the Squadron once again became operational on December 22nd and from that date a standby crew was kept on duty at the Operation Block.
			As from December 19th Madura, in common with all other G.R. Stations and Squadrons formerly controlled by No. 225 Group, came under direct operational control of No. 222 Group. Some difficulty is at present being experienced in handling the increased volume of signals traffic. In particular considerable delay has been experienced by the Operations Room Staff in the receipt of their Forms Green and White. This has been due to the frequent unserviceability of the teleprinter link with Colombo, which had to be relayed through Bangalore and Trichinopoly, and consequent delays in decyphering W/T signals.
			Following a great improvement in the aircraft serviceability an extensive flying training programme has been carried out.
			II. Administration.
			In order to unify operational and administrative control, the Squadron came under the Administrative control of No. 222 Group, but H.Q. No. 225 Group continued responsible for the provision of administrative services.
			III. Operations.
	23rd Dec		The first operation with a Liberator comprised a patrol of the East coast shipping lane between latitudes 11N and 17N. This was carried out successfully by F/O. James in a flight of 10 hours commencing his patrol soon after first light. A strict look-out was kept for submarines in view of a report that enemy agents had been landed on the Tanjore coast a few days previously, but no suspicious sightings of any kind were made.
	29th Dec		W/O. Thomas was briefed for a patrol of the Australian shipping route to a latitude of 02°30'S taking off at dawn. He returned to base after 1 hour with a fuel leak and landed at 08.25. F/O. Russell was then briefed to carry out this patrol until last light and he took off at 09.30. This sortie was carried out successfully in 11 ¼ hours, without incident.
			IV. Non-Operational Flying.
	7th Dec		S/Ldr. Gane flew to Kayattar and Chettinad at the request of No. 225 Group to test and report on the serviceability of the runways for Heavy Aircraft. Kayattar was found to be the more suitable. At both airfields taxi tracks and dispersals were inadequate. Photographs were taken of each airfield.
	13th Dec		2 Aircraft piloted by F/O. Russell and F/O. James carried out consumption tests over a four legged course off the East Coast, crossing the coastline at Negapatan. The aircraft covered the course in 7 ½ and 8 ¼ hours respectively. Crews were briefed on the lines of an operational briefing to test out the procedure.
	13th Dec		F/O. Ensom visited Bobbili, Ellore, Gannavaram, Godavari and Tadepalle-Gudem Airfields in a tour lasting 4 days, to carry out runway tests, and take photographs. The first mentioned airfield has 2 concrete runways both suitable for Heavy Aircraft. The remainder with the exception of Ellore each have one 2000 yds concrete runway fully serviceable and one 1500 yds gravelled runway which would only be serviceable in dry weather. The long runway at Ellore is W.B. Macadam.
	19th Dec		S/Ldr. Gane carried out the consumption Test Exercise.
	24th Dec		A signal was received ordering the Detachment of three Liberators to Cuttack

			on 27th December, together with ground crews. After all preparation had been made the detachment was cancelled a few hours before take-off.										
	27th Dec		F/O Ensom took vertical photographs of Madura airfield from 12000 ft.										
	28th Dec		A detachment of 2 aircraft (Captains – F/O. Morris and F/O. Aldcroft) was despatched for a short course at No. 21 Armament Practice Camp, Cholavram. S/Ldr. Gane and F/O. McKay ferried ground crews, F/O. McKay making 2 trips during the day.										
	29th Dec		Wing Commander Fox flew a Liberator to Ratmalana to visit No. 222 Group, in order to discuss various points concerning operations. The following were stated to be the standard operational requirements:-										
			<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Petrol</td> <td>D.C's</td> <td>Crew</td> <td>Range</td> <td>Speed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2330 Gals.</td> <td>8</td> <td>10</td> <td>1800 Nant. Miles</td> <td>137 knots.</td> </tr> </table>	Petrol	D.C's	Crew	Range	Speed	2330 Gals.	8	10	1800 Nant. Miles	137 knots.
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			All Leigh light equipment is to be removed whilst experience is being gained as a normal G.R. Liberator Squadron.										
			The Mk. XIV Bomb sights are also to be removed.										
			In order to minimize the delay in the receipt of operational signals only sufficient shipping to cover operational requirements each day will be sent.										
			A new state of readiness policy letter is being prepared by No. 222 Group. Meanwhile one aircraft per day is to be used for training.										
	30th Dec		F/Lt. Waterton carried out a Shadowing Exercise off the East coast of Ceylon with an aircraft carrier (HMS Victorious) in accordance with IOGROPS Tactical Instruction No. 26. Owing to the absence of cloud cover the aircraft left the carrier to make sighting reports regarding contact periodically to check position.										
			V. Bombing & Gunnery Practice										
Madura			A bombing range was set out south of the Airfield and whilst supplies of Practice Bombs lasted low-level bombing was carried out daily. In all, 317 bombs were dropped.										
			Air firing was carried out and Depth Charges dropped in the Gulf of Mannar off Tuticorin.										
			VI. Personnel										
			Strength:										
			Officers 41										
			N.C.O's 265										
			Airmen 292										
	1st Dec		Arrivals F/O. Bennett S. G. 135795 Radar										
			Departures Two aircrew were posted to No. 357 Squadron including										
			F/Lt. Powell, J. A. 138858 Pilot										
			F/O. Fenwick, A. G. 150072 2nd Pilot										
			F/O. Smith, G. 131571 Pilot										
			F/O. Pemberton, N. W. Aus.417230 NAV.										
			Commissioned P/O. Law, J. A. 185341 Pilot										
			P/O. Corbett, F. M. J.89410 Pilot										
			VII Sports and Entertainments.										
			A weekly programme of camp entertainments was arranged, and knock out competitions for football, hockey and table tennis players organised the finals to be played off at Christmas.										
			A most successful airmen's party was held at Christmas. Subscriptions were collected from the whole Squadron and copious stocks of liquor and other refreshments laid in. A large tent was erected outside the Canteen complete with a stage for the Squadron band and entertainers, and the celebrations were kept up for three nights. Even then, sufficient remained for a New Year's Eve Party.										