

February 1944 Form 540

203 Squadron

Air27/1200

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
			Month of February 1944
			I. Introductory.
			The squadron's activities during the month were divided between Santa Cruz and the detachments at Cochin and Ratmalana, with aircraft of the Ratmalana detachment also operating from Sigiriya on an alternative landing ground. Minor inspections for both detachments were carried out at Cochin, all aircraft returning to Santa Cruz for majors. The aircrews at detachments were changed at regular intervals so that all crews had an opportunity of operating from either Cochin or Ratmalana.
			II Personal.
			1. Command.
			Wing Commander C. A. Masterman O.B.E., D.F.C. was in command with the exception of the period between 9th and 14th March, during his visit to the detachments, when Squadron Leader D. C. Hunter took over command.
			2. Postings.
			Arrivals. F/Lt. Troughton-Smith and F/O. McKay were posted from the U.K. with crews. A total of eight new officers were posted to the squadron during the month.
			Departures. F/Lt. Walsh, who had joined the squadron three months previously for training purposes, was posted to Salbani. F/O. E. G. Thomas (Intelligence Officer) left for Cuttack. F/O. Selwynn, F/O. Mitchell and F/O. McLean were posted to the Middle East and F/O. Henry to U.K.
			3. Casualties. 1334998? Sgt. Chapman D. (WO/AG) died of burns sustained when the aircraft in which he was flying to Ratmalana undershot the runway, crashed on landing and caught fire. The other occupants of the aircraft escaped with shock and minor burns. The aircraft was destroyed.
			4. Detachment. F/Lt. Waterton, three other officers and five N.C.O.'s were detached to form C. & M. Parties for new airfields.
			III. Operations.
			The total number of sorties shows an increase of 26 over the previous month's total, numbers for the different detachments being as follows:-
			Number of      Hours.
			Sorties          Mins.
			Ratmalana            42            200.43
			Cochin                28            167.59
			Sigiriya              5             37.20
			Santa Cruz            25            172.25
			Total                    100          668.27 <sup>1</sup> ?
			The majority of operations consisted of convoy escort patrols, a total of ?? sorties being carried out on this work. On one occasion only was a 'not met' signal sent. This was on a night sortie from Ratmalana under conditions which gave rise to numerous spurious S.E. contacts, thought to be due to static cloud bank. The convoy was subsequently found.
			Air craft proceeding to and from detachment carried out patrols of the

<sup>1</sup> Data given does not add up to this number.

		shipping lanes between Bombay, Cochin and Colombo. No enemy sightings were made on these operations. On March 28th. a U.boat sighting was reported by a merchant vessel 350 miles West of Bombay, and within 40 minutes two aircraft were ready to take off, when the operation was cancelled.
		IV. Weather.
		Flying conditions were generally good over the sea, though severe thunderstorms were encountered over Ceylon. Visibility over the sea was almost invariably limited by haze to about 10 miles, and thus restricted the chances of sighting a U-Boat.
		V. Training.
		Flying Training was still restricted owing to the shortage of serviceable aircraft. Training flights amounted to 41 hours. Toward the end of the month four aircrews were selected for intensive training and a programme of low level bombing, air to ground gunner, S.E. and Wireless training was commenced. One aircraft was stripped of superfluous equipment for use in training second pilots up to first pilot standard.
		VI. Serviceability.
		The average for the month (56%) fell below the February average owing to the large number of inspections and engine changes which fell due. The life of the engines has now been extended and new aircraft have been allotted so that the situation should improve.
		VII. Sports
		It was another good month for the squadron's football team who won three of their four matches. In addition numerous games were played between sections in the inter flight league, and a challenge cup has been obtained for this competition.
		The Badminton courts were in use each evening. It was hoped that some matches could be arranged, but local opposition was not forth-coming.
		For the Cochin detachment there was football and cricket, and shooting contests were arranged with the station and a Navy Team.
		D. Gordon? Hunter S/L
		for C. A. Masterman,
		Wing Commander Officer Commanding,
		No. 203 Squadron R.A.F.