

November 1943 Form 540

203 Squadron, Middle East

Air27/1199

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
			Month of November 1943
In the Field	1943 November		I. Introductory.
			During the month the Squadron was exclusively concerned with moving from the Middle East to India and changing over from Baltimore to Wellingtons. There was no operational flying.
			II. Personal
			(a) Command.
			The Squadron was commanded throughout the month by W/Cdr. C. A. Masterman O.B.E., D.F.C.
			(b) Postings. (Arrivals.)
			Sixteen complete Wellington crews joined the squadron. F/O Burnaide joined the Squadron on the 4th November.
			(Departures.)
			Most of the old Baltimore crews left the Squadron with the exception of the Commanding Officer, 2 Flight Commanders and 2 Deputy Flight Commanders with their respective crews.
			(c) Casualty.
			At 1600 hrs. on the 5th F/Lt. R. G. Fox, R.A.A.F. was carrying out local solo flying practice at LG.01 in a Wellington aircraft. Shortly after taking off the aircraft was seen to dive to the ground and crash. F/Lt. Fox was killed and the cause of the accident was unknown.
			III. The Move.
			The move to India took place in three distinct stages:- (a) Berka III to LG.91 (b) LG.91 to Santa Cruz. (Air Party) (c) LG.91 to Santa Cruz (Sea Party)
			(a) The first news of the move was made known on the evening of the 24th. October. As might be expected rumours soon were rife and a notice the following day in D.R.O's asking for personnel who knew Russian was a typical trail of false scent.
			On the 26th. over 100 members of the ground staff left for LG.91 in four D.C.3's to establish a temporary base in the Delta Area at which postings to and from the Squadron could conveniently be carried out. Two days later the main ground party had packed up most of the Berka camp and left by road in convoy for LG.91. The convoy was fortunate in avoiding numerous rain storms which prevailed at the time. Some excitement occurred on the 29th when the cook-house gharry and trailer stalled on the pass out of Derna at the head of the convoy and two hours delay ensured before the procession could move on. Meanwhile some of the ground staff of 454 (RAAF) Squadron had moved to Berka and were keeping 203 Squadron operational, while part of the aircrews were moving in Baltimores to LG.91. to get acquainted with their new aircraft.
			On 1st. November thirteen aircraft arrived at LG.01 from UK. with complete crews and the following day the main rear party arrived from Berka. On the 3rd. Two Wellingtons went down to Berka and returned on the 4th with all the

		remaining aircrews who were due for India. Thus it was that in 10 days the Squadron had packed up, moved nearly 600 miles and reformed for the next stage of the journey.
		It should be stated at this point that the change of aircraft and the need for reaching India as soon as possible limited to five the number of crews who could remain with the Squadron. Accordingly the Commanding Officer, S/Ldr. D. G. Hunter, S/Ldr. K. F. Scotney D.F.M., F/Lt. R. G. Fox RAAF and F/O. I. F. McLean were the only captains of aircraft who remained with the Squadron, together with a second pilot, a navigator and three WO. AG's each and one or two spare aircrew; the remainder of the flying personnel were those who had flown the Wellingtons from the U.K.
		(b) The air party for India left in two parts on the 7th and 9th, Karachi being the only known destination. The following was the composition of the formations:-
		Nov. 7th.
		S/Ldr. D. G. Hunter
		S/Ldr. K. F. Scotney, D. F. M.
		F/Lt. D. A. Taylor
		F/O. V. R. Ensom RCAF
		F/O. Jones
		F/O. R. G. Knight
		F/O. C. Waterton RCAF
		F/O. P. R. White
		Nov. 9th.
		W/Cdr. C. A. Masterman, O.B.E., D.F.C.
		F/Lt. D. L. Harvey
		F/Lt. G. Mosher RCAF
		F/O I. F. McLean
		F/O. P. Sandall
		P/O. J. R. Russell RCAF
		S/Sgt. F. S. Johnson RCAF
		The scheduled overnight stops were Habbaniyah and Bahrein or Sharjah.
	Nov. 10?th.	F/Lt. Gane took off from L.G. 9?? for Cairo West leaving the following day for Karachi.
	Nov. 9th.	First arrivals at Karachi, where all aircraft remained for several days for inspections.
	Nov 15?th.	Nine aircraft left Karachi for Santa Cruz under the W/Cdr and S/Ldr. Hunter. A camp site was immediately established under canvas and everyone set to get organised. Each officer was detailed for a special job. Everything worked well and numerous difficulties were overcome.
	Nov. 1??th.	Air Marshal Garrod inspected the squadron.
	Nov. 17?th.	Tannery planned as Squadron H.Q. with offices for C.O. Flights and various sections.
	Nov. 20th.	Gen talk by S/Ldr. Sellars and F/Lt. Deadman of 225 Group.
	Nov. 23rd.	First Flights at Santa Cruz dual instruction given.
		(c) The sea main party left LG.91 on Nov. 10th for 22 P.T.C. in two train parties.
	Nov. 13th.	Left 22 P.T.C. at 2330 hrs. by train for Suez expecting to go straight on to the ship. At about mid-day on Sunday 14th. the party reached the outskirts of Suez and were dumped in an Army Transit Camp all ranks feeding together from a communal cookhouse. At 0400 hrs on the 16th. the party was paraded for breakfast and eventually left in lorries for the quayside and by 0800 hrs were on board S.S. Strathmore. Shortly after 1000 hrs. on the same day anchor was lifted and course was set for Aden en route for Bombay. The voyage was quite uneventful but generally appreciated by all after the strain of moving.
		At 1600 hrs on the 20?th. S.S. Strathmore docked at Bombay harbour but no one was allowed off that day. On Sunday?? the 2??th. the Squadron Commanding Officer came aboard and shortly after ????? hrs. the party disembarked and left by road for Santa Cruz. S/Ldr. Scotney – F/O. Waterton arrived the same day from Karachi. The next two days were spent in enlarging the camp – getting organised for operations.

			73 Hours 10 mins were flown on non-operational flights in India including the transit flights from Karachi.
			Weather
			The climate in India when the squadron arrived was very similar to the Summer in the Middle East except for a greater degree of humidity. Blue cloudless skies with the thermometer round the 90° F. mark.
			Wing Commander,
			Officer Commanding,
			No. 203 Squadron,
			Royal Air Force.