

From: O.C. 292 Squadron Ceylon Flight.
To: O.C. 292 Squadron, Jessore.
Date: 21st June, 1944.

Weekly report – 14 June to 21 June.

1. It is confirmed (our signal 292/cs/1 of 20/6/44) that H.Q. 292 Squadron Ceylon Flight was established w.e.f. 0900 hours 20th June 1944 at R.A.F. Station Sigiriya.

We have been able to obtain temporary accommodation in the S.H.Q. building pending certain alterations to the building which we will eventually take over. This is an excellent arrangement as an interim measure; as it enables our as yet inexperienced orderly room staff to obtain some assistance from the S.H.A. people.

2. To start from the beginning of the week under review, I arrived at Madras on 14 June in Warwick H?F945 to find that the tailplane and elevator was minus most of the fabric on the port side (which probably accounts for a certain unusual feel about the controls on the trip:). It would seem that this was caused by the felt or rubber packing trip under the elevator dust excluder working loose and becoming detached at one end, beating on the fabric, allowing it to be torn off by the airflow. I would suggest that all aircraft in the unit be inspected for possible rotting of the felt or rubber strips at their points of attachment.

3. I had tail temporarily soled and healed at Madras and pushed on to Ratmalana the next afternoon, where I successfully liased with F/Lt. Bird and the rest of our boys of the Ratmalana Detachment. I found this detachment quite happy and apparently running very smoothly. I contacted the Station people there, and they, too, seem quite happy about everything. Incidentally, the Station Commander was a Flight Commander at my O.T.U. in 1940 (a useful circumstance!)

4. The next two days, 16th & 17th, I spent at H.Q. 222 Group, where everyone was most helpful. In these two days, I managed to fix up everything which it was possible to budget for, and I think I worried everyone in the entire building, but not to the extent of upsetting their good humour.

5. The temporary 'soleing and heeling' to the aircraft having been made permanent by Sunday, we proceeded to Sigiriya on Monday 19th, where I immediately contacted the Station Commander (W/Cdr. Brady, an old friend of mine from Turnberry). Whilst he was very pleased to have us here, he expressed the opinion that this airfield is most unsuitable for us from an operational point of view. The runway is 2,000 yards long, but it is simply hacked out of the virgin jungle, with the result that an aircraft must climb like the clappers immediately after take-off to miss the trees, and there is no margin whatever to allow for swinging or drifting. Also, because there is usually a fairly stiff breeze blowing here (at an angle to the runway) the cutting through the trees causes a funnel effect on the approach which is most disconcerting if not actually dangerous. Having been wrongly briefed that the further half of the runway was very badly pot-holed, I made my approach fairly slowly and had a most uncomfortable jockeying ride for the last 300 feet of decent, during which the a/c dropped sideways for a full 100 feet with the airspeed right off the clock before I could force a recovery. The C.O. says that sort of thing is quite normal here. I suggest you brief all pilots coming here to approach fairly high and at not less than 90 knots – unless they are very lightly loaded.

6. A further complication is that this station is scheduled to close down on about 1st August for repairs and rebuilding. I learned all about this at Group, and the intention is that we move to Kankasanturai (in the extreme north of the island) with the remainder of this station on or about that date if KKS is ready by then (which is extremely unlikely, as far as I can gather). Anyway, there is little to worry about in this, for apparently this station will remain open until the new one is ready, unless that date should be so protracted as to fall after the start of the second monsoon, that is about the beginning of October.

7. I have been very lucky in obtaining the services of F/Lt. Primrose as temporary adjutant, pending the arrival of the permanent admin. type.

8. I propose flying down to Ratmalana on Saturday next with three of my drivers, to collect the M.T., which has been promised for that date.

9. Bodies are coming in slowly – our present strength is 18 ground personnel of all trades – and I hope to become operational by the time the next aircraft and crew arrives. I signalled you yesterday that we were ready and anxious to receive the balance of our Air party: I hope you will do all you can to hurry them up. Incidentally I saw a signal at Group H.Q. from A.C.S.E.A., posting F/O Fulton to Ceylon Flight, and allotting H?V472? (F/Sgt. Dunn's a/c) to us. I explained that that arrangement contravened the arrangement made at 231 Group between 231 Group, yourself representing H.Q. 292 Squadron, and myself, representing Ceylon Flight. It was agreed that 222 Group would take action to request that the original arrangement be adhered to, and a signal on those lines was dispatched at once.

10. I have not yet had the opportunity of visiting the China Bay Sub-Detachment, but hope to do so early next week. I have, however, been advised of some of their bothers, and have already taken action to straighten them out. One of their main difficulties has been lack of transport of any sort, owing to the establishment being for a 5-ton truck, which, apparently it is impossible to use on the roads at China Bay. I am not quite clear as to the exact reason, but the truck has never been driven so I have taken action with Group to have the establishment altered to a 15-cwt. vehicle.

11. I think this is everything which can be put into writing, although there are on or two minor things which we can talk over when next I see you.

S/Ldr.

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