

No 292 Squadron Weekly Bulletin (no. 6)
Fortnight ending 14/5/44

This is a fortnightly Bulletin for two reasons. One is that I am deputy Station Commander which gives me a lot of extra work, and on both Mondays I am also involved in Ops. (Looking at my diary I see that three weeks have elapsed. Now time flies when you are busy). Secondly, a week ago I was informed that W/Cdr. Hocks?? was in Calcutta and presumed he would come out to see us at an early date. My Bulletin would obviously be of more value after a discussion with him. He still has not come out to see us and I find that after being disagreed with on most points by the 231 Group A.S.R. Officer, he stormed off in a rage, where to anybody knows. Probably to Chittagong. I expect he will eventually pass this way, but I had better get on with this Bulletin. As regards this A.S.R. officer he is a S/Ldr. Hillier??. One of the troubles I experienced in the early days was that there was nobody at 231 Group with the job of co-ordinating etc. etc. A.S.R. stuff. The only pukka A.S.R. officer was S/Ldr Pailthorpe?? of Eastern Air Command, under which 231 Group comes. I was badly in need of somebody at 231 Group through whose all my letters could pass, and who could chase up things for me. I would leave Group with thousands of promises, and find that in a week they had all been forgotten. As a result of a very strong moan both to the S.A.S.O. and Neshe??, one of the Controllers (S/Ldr Hillier) has been appointed A.S.R. Officer. He is young and keen and everything works very much better now. I address all my letters for his attention, he sees that they reach the right people and that the right people get on them. His position as A.S.R. Officer is now castured???, and every body at Group from the A.O.C. downwards goes straight to him when any information is required on A.S.R. I now means that I have one person only to keep well informed of everything that is going on, and who can act as a sort of clearing house for me. If either of you are communicating with 231 Group make sure you put Attn. S/Ldr Hillier.

2. I fully understand that poor "E" Flight has an almost impossible job, and I cannot be of much help being 1400 miles away with all my information weeks old, and tied here as I am at the present. What I am fighting for, and what I want to see W/Cdr Hoche about, is to get it over here the moment the aircraft can fly. I feel quite sure that events have proved that the only way it can be formed efficiently is to have it under the same Group, if not at the same aerodrome, and we can then give full aid with men, equipment, and the specialised knowledge having built up in this Group. Talking of Group, the set-up has changed. All Org. comes under 231 Group. All Ops come under Strategic Air Force. They both come under the same roof, but it does save delay on letters if it is addressed to the correct formation.

3. For month now we have been going to move in a fortnights time, and during this time three aerodromes have been mentioned as the place to which we are going. I do know it is as fault of Group, who are being sotted about just as madly as we are. It does however make life very difficult as nobody will give authority for the thousand and one things we require doing and building. Our personnel are still scattered over seven messes and thousands of billet anything up to five miles apart. A panic call out of working hours causes a real panic, and we were very pleased with ourselves when we managed to get two aircraft off in 1 ¼ hours the other day.

4. Since the last Bulletin we have had two successful sorties and a pat on the back from the A.O.C. On the first, an Air Sea Rescue H.S.L. with all engines u/s was drifting about in the bay. I was in the middle of a bad cyclone with monsoon rain, a gale, clouds sweeping the water, and a few clear patches. Out of three machines, one turned back one completed his search but passed by the H.S.L. without seeing it. The third with F/O Strombee as Captain, and F/O Berses??ku as 2nd pilot found the H.S.L. They dropped three Bircham Barrels, each of which with the ropes over the launch. For your information, the Barrels drop into the water with the ropes training. What Strombee did was to fly low up wind, and drop the barrels so as to overshoot slightly. The training ropes fell over the launch leaving nothing to the H.S.L. crew nothing further to do other than to haul in on the ropes.

5. a few days later a Liberator went missing, with a fading plot just o the edge of the Sundarbans. Hall and Strombee went out, and Strombee right away found the wreckage of the Lib. In shallow water. We did a few more trips, one trying to guide a launch to the wreck, unsuccessful because the water was

too shallow to let the launch get neared than 17miles, and further searches for the crew. The crew eventually turned up under their own power, having bailed out before the crash.

6. As regards having 2nd Pilots on the Warwicks, 231 Group have recommended to A.C.S.E.A. that second pilots are added to our establishment. As an alternative, I had suggested we had them as a substitute to one of the Gunners.

7. As regards the boats, I have been informed that they are arriving without parachutes! Bags of panic. Until A.S., S.E.A. sort that one out, we have just the one on the boat I flew out. This boat, by the way, was damaged at Delhi, and given to the Nav. School at Calcutta where crews are being trained in its use. I told Group without mincing my words that had I known it was to become a play thing, I would not have gone to the bother of getting it and flying it out here. That it cannot be made serviceable for dropping is, in y opinion, completer 'balls'. It has been ailing very well for weeks now. A.C., S.E.A. have designed, at my request, a portable trolley, It was in designing this that the bottom was damaged. I saw the prototype at Delhi, but since have heard nothing of its development.

8. We have received an instruction from A.C.,S.E.A. that the Sea Otters are to be landbased. In other words the opinions of Almack & Pollock that it is an unsuitable craft for X-wind goes for nothing. I hope "C" Flight gets one nice and early, so that the point can be proved in practice before "E" Flight get going.

9. This very moment a signal has arrived calling all C.O.s to a conference in Calcutta at which future locations of Units will be arranged. It looks as if at last the Americans have decided which of our aerodromes they require, and which they are going to give us in return. This is what has been causing all the trouble.

10. I have a "C" Flight report for "E" Flight. I think the best thing is to give "C" Flight S/Ldr Pollock's report of his visit to Karachi, which give the latest Gen. I enclose copies of my Mayfly form. I am sending actual ones so that you can see how I arrange them.

Officer Commanding
No. 292 Squadron
Royal Air Force