

No 292 Squadron

No. 292 Squadron Weekly Bulletin No. 12

28/10/44

I am afraid it is about three weeks since I wrote the last Bulletin, but as I have not had one from either of you for a month, What the Hell, Chaps? – What the Hell? Now that all my aircraft are grounded life is not quite so hectic.

2. After the A.O.C.'s visit to Ceylon, he dropped in and saw me about it. He favoured the idea of severing our connection with "C" & "E" Flights, and making 292 Squadron a three flight Squadron of Warwicks divided between here and Chittagong. The following day I spent the whole morning with the S.A.S.O. and he told me to send in two letters. One advising the change of location of "C??" & "E??" Flights and the other about the severing of our connection with "C" and "E" Flight.

3. This I sent in, and after allowing some time for it to be dealt with, again visited the S.A.S.O. The first thing that happened was that the A.O.C. ticked me off for not sending in the letters. The next hour was spent in looking for the files. More promises of action and today I received a copy of a letter from Hoche to 231 Group saying that it was always the intention for "E??" & "D" Flights to form at Jessore, and that afterward "D" should go to Santa Cruz, and "E" to Chittagong. He is a stubborn old fool especially after that Sea Otter Report. I don't think the A.O.C. will take that sitting down.

4. I just gave up trying to get the extra machine for "C" Flight. 231 Group just absorbs by requests like blotting paper. Today, as a result of even ruder signals, the S.A.O. ran me up and asked me, "What do you expect us to do about it, all the Warwicks are grounded". As he is only a Wing Commander, I was extremely rude but still no Warwick for "C" Flight.

5. I am enclosing a summary of a week of unsuccessful ops which finished up in our losing a machine and three blokes, and a few days later grounding all our machines. On the last day of this ops. Clapman took off in the dark and had an engine failure (port) at 1,000 ft. just as he was settling on course. The prop would not feather and he could not maintain height. He got back to the drome but saw it rather late for a landing, and anyway some Spitfires were taking off. Circling for another landing, he lost the rest of his height and put it down in the water just off Cox's Bazaar. The machine filled very quickly and three did not get out. Ruddock the W/Op stayed at his set and we think was laid out by the impact. Walden and Silver (a new gunner on his first trip) were trapped by not being able to push the dinghy box out. The aircraft was bent there so I suppose it was jammed. Clapham was sitting on top of the aircraft try to help them pull it out. There were nine in the machine and the remaining six got into the dinghy all right and were picked up in 3 ¼ hrs., and suffered no ill effects.

6. A tremendous amount of fabric trouble was experienced throughout this ops. The Group Engineer Officer came down and examined all the aircraft we had at Jessore. He right away grounded three, whose fabric on the top of the wing was definitely not safe. The dope cracked and flaking off the wing, and generally loose and flabby. A few days after this ops. Was over, Berry was testing one of the aircraft whose fabric was better than most. He did a diving turn and between the leading edge and the spar, and between the Stbd. Engine and fuselage, seven panels of fabric disappeared, and four became completely tattered. He had great difficulty controlling the machine, jettisoned most of his petrol and did a beautiful landing. He grounded the lot right away.

7. Today a Mr. Fisher, a dope specialist from U.K. came and examined our aircraft. His unofficial opinion is that if all the aircraft have the fabric removed between the leading edge and spar they will be safe to fly away to an M.U. to have the complete wings recovered. They should then last us another few months. It is only the top surfaces that are bad, which makes him think the monsoon has nothing to do with it, but the strong light and heat. He is putting his report in tonight, and the A.O.C. is to make his edict tomorrow. In the meantime I have just asked Group to keep you in the picture (you being "C" Flight) in

case you have the same trouble brewing. I am sorry to hear a Walrus has been pranged so has a Sea Otter as we – so what! I don't anticipate having any Warwicks at all by tomorrow night, they will all belong to the R.S.U. The S.A.S.O. says he has demanded Hoche's presence here. Sparks will fly then.

My Hurricane has been u/s for about a fortnight now, for some silly part we could not get. It should be going again tomorrow I may have some time on my hands now to visit my parish.

E. A. Starling
Wing Commander, Commanding.
No. 292 Squadron R.A.F.

P.S. Everybody at Group have leapt at my suggestion that this is a grand chance to ask for Fortresses for this job. We were told by the Wellington experts, the moment we arrived, that this trouble was bound to happen.