

## December 1944: Form 540

358 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
Kolar	December		
	1		Wing Escort Exercise again cancelled owing to unsuitable weather conditions. Some flying training under No23 A.P.C. Syllabus for fighter affiliation was carried out.
	2		Weather conditions again caused the Wing Escort Exercise to be cancelled. No flying possible. Weather conditions dense low cloud and heavy rain. (visibility 2 miles).
			Air Vice Marshal M. L. DeSoer, A.O.C. No. 225 Group visited the Station.
			F/O. J. B. Smart and F/O. R. ?. Robinson and crews ex No. 5 O.T.U., Canada arrived on posting.
	3		Stand down for personnel not required for training purposes. Weather conditions were fair with low cloud and some rain.
	4		A/S/Ldr. A. S. H?. Pim (60566) (DFC) arrived on posting to take over duties as 'B' Flight Commander.
			Honours & Awards. 361951 W?/O. A. E. Dennard, Mentioned in Despatches for meritorious Service while serving with No. 218 Squadron in U. K., (London Gazette 2nd June 1943).
	5		Weather conditions good. Formation flying during the day.
			General. An E.N.S.A. Concert Party gave an amusing entertainment in the Station Cinema on the night of the 5th. The performance was very popular and "the girls from home" were given a big hand. The party were afterwards entertained in the Sgts. Mess.
	6		Weather conditions excellent. Formation flying, air firing and bombing carried out.
	7		Weather conditions excellent. H.Qs, BAFSEA order the Squadron to move to Digri on 27th December.
	8		Weather conditions very good, some light cloud. Formation flying, air firing and bombing training.
	9.		Conditions as yesterday but very heavy ground fog delayed take off for training. O.C. and Adjutant visited H.Qs 225 Group re the move of the Squadron, mess grants and the provision of welfare and sports amenities.
	10.		Very heavy ground mist in early morning delayed scheduled training programme. Aircraft took off 10.45 hours.
	11.		Slight early morning mist which cleared by 0900 hours. 6 aircraft on formation flying, fighter affiliation and bombing.
	12.		10/10ths Stratus cloud at 3000' visibility 15/10 miles. 6 aircraft on formation, fighter affiliation and bombing.
	13.	07.45	S/Ldr. Gauntlett, DFC, F/Lt. Wood (Adjutant) F/Lt. Moore (Sq. Eng. O) W/O. Hodge (Sq. E. O.) and N.C.Os from Sections flew to Digri as reconnaissance party. A check of the airfield layout and all office, flights, H.Qs and domestic accommodation was made to ensure the smooth influx of personnel and equipment on arrival date. There appears to be a shortage of furniture and fans for offices and domestic buildings. M.T. has been allotted by No. 329 M.U. against 'dues in' and this will have to be collected from Calcutta before the Main Party arrives on approximately January 2nd, 1945. Arrangements were made with 185 Wing Equipment Officer for the supply of cooking utensils for each mess, and to make demands for the initial issue of cooking utensils. 185 Wing Catering Officer was also informed of strengths and arrival

			dates of parties. A considerable amount of maintenance on domestic buildings is required. Camp amenities appeared comprehensive.
	14		Weather conditions excellent. Squadron formation training and bombing.
	15		Good flying weather. Training programme in full swing.
	16	1200	Reconnaissance Party returned from Digri. H.Qs. BAFSEA signal departure of main party by rail on approx. 27th December – Advance party to move Dec. 21st by rail. Formation, Bombing and air firing training carried out.
	17		Arrangements made with No. 2 M.C.U., R.A.F., for the move of the advance party from Bowringpet at 1200 hours on 21st. Dec. 1944. Weather conditions good. Squadron on training.
	18		Weather condition good, with slight morning mist. Squadron on training examinations. No flying. A supper dance for 180 airmen given by Champion Reef Gold Mines, Ltd.
	19		Weather conditions good. Formation training with 12 aircraft.
	20	1030	Weather good. Squadron put up twelve aircraft on an exercise named 'Hayward' to carry out the first of two long range operational flights involving (a) Formation flying (b) Formation bombing and (c) Fighter Affiliation. Squadron Movement Ordr No. 1 issued.
	21	1200	Squadron advance party of 2 officers, 4 SNCOs and 28 airmen left Bowringpet Railway Station for Digri. F/Lt. H. H. Monks (GD(P) i/c Party. E.T.A. Chandrakona Road 06.30 hours on 25th December. 1 F/Sgt. and 9 D.M.Ts routed to Calcutta to collect Squadron M.T. from 329 M.U., and to deliver to Digri. 1 'C.G.' filled with Aircraft spares, tyres, etc., proceeded under escort. No flying carried out, weather conditions 10/10ths low cloud and rain in Afternoon.
	22		12 aircraft on second Exercise 'Hayward'. Weather conditions good, some light Cumulo-Stratus at 4000 ft.
			Group Captain Sutcliffe, DFC, S.A.S.O., H.Qs 231 Group visited the Squadron to discuss the impending move and the supply of equipment and personnel.
	23	1140	Air Marshal, Sir A. G. R. Garrod, KCB., OBE., MC., DFC., Allied Air Commander in Chief, South East Asia Command arrived Kolar. He addressed the Officers and NCOs Aircrew and NCOs Ground Crew of No. 358 Squadron in the Station Cinema. He spoke of the operational conditions existing in the Burma and S.E.A. theatres of war and of the role the Squadron would be expected to fulfil. The A.A.C in C described the close liaison which existed between the three British Fighting Forces and also with the American Forces and disserted upon the difficulties which had assailed the execution of operations in these theatres. He emphasised particularly the close liaison with the Army who now looked upon the Air Forces as their L of C in most respects when operating in Burma. In this address he referred to the "build up" of the Heavy Bomber Force in India and congratulated members of the late 1673 H.C.U., on their effort and achievement, with practically no assistance from other Commands. A.A.C in C left by air for Ratmalana, E.T.A. 1530 hours.
			Training under 23 A.P.C. Syllabus ends.
	24.		Christmas preparations completed. All the Messes were attractively decorated and the "Christmas Spirit" was decidedly noticeable. All ranks except duty personnel stood down from 1200 hours until 0800 hours on the 26th December. 169958 F/O. R. Halliday, Medical Officer arrived on posting.
	25.		Christmas Day. The customary proceedings took place in the most enjoyable manner. At 1030 hours a "Fancy Dress" Football match – Officers vs. Sergeants was played. Some of the outfits defy description and many were destroyed in the scrums. Half time was announced by the arrival of beer on a 15 cwt lorry. The second half was of a rather short duration and the

		exhausted teams retired. The N.C.Os were entertaining the Officers to 'light refreshment' and a conjuring display by a Punjabi. The officers and N.C.Os then proceeded to the Airmen's Mess to serve dinner. The G.C was transported, fully garlanded in the native fashion, in a bullock Cart drawn by six men, and arrived at the airmen's mess amid cheers. An excellent dinner was served consisting of soup, turkey & vegetables, Christmas Pudding, chocolate trifle and fruit jelly & Nuts.
	26	All personnel at work. No. 2 M.C.U. advise by telephone that 8 'C.Gs', and 6 'KCs' are available at Bowringpet for loading. M.T. organised and first loads of Squadron equipment and baggage arrive at Bowringpet at 0920 hours. Adjutant arrived at Railway Station at 1130 hours to find that no goods vehicles had been placed for loading and that the Station Master had no knowledge of the trucks. No. 2 M.C. was at once contacted by telephone and state that the move is postponed. 20 3-ton. lorry loads of equipment and baggage had to be returned 19 miles to Kolar. The move was postponed by HQs BAFSEA Signal Om.418 dated 26th December 1944, T.O.O. 261100 FG. received at Kolar at 1353 hours 26th December 1944. Squadron ordered to be ready to move on 1st. January 1945.
	27	Normal working routine re-commenced. Weather conditions perfect.
	28	Perfect flying conditions. Six aircraft detailed on Cross Country formation – box of Six – Five aircraft detailed for bombing practice and 2 crews on Wet Dinghy drill at Bethamangalam.
	29	Early morning – cloud at ground level but soon lifted. Perfect flying weather. Box of 6 A/c on cross country formation, five aircraft detailed for bombing and 2 crews on Wet Dinghy drill at Bethamangalam.
		No. 2 M.C.U. confirm 1st January 1945 as a firm date for Squadron Movement and orders and instructions issued to complete preparations by 0930 hours on that date. Amendment No. 1 to Movement Order No. 1 dated 20th December 1944 issued.
		52436 F/O. D. Currie-Davies (Tech/EE) arrived from B.R.D., Worli on posting as Squadron Electrical Officer.
	30	No. 2 M.C.U. confirm 8 C.GS and 6 KCs placed for loading at Bowringpet by 1200 hours today. Loading commenced this afternoon. All immediate requirements to proceed with the Main Party train and non immediate to follow in C.Gs by ordinary goods service.
	31	All kit and baggage transported to Bowringpet Station and loaded. No passenger stock had yet appeared.
		During the month the Squadron flew 688.23 hours on training and 28.40 hours non Training. Total – 717.03 hours. Wastage of aircraft and personnel – Nil. Personnel Strength:-
		Officers 57. S.NC.Os. 256. B.O.Rs. 317. I.O.Rs. 20 – Total 650.
		(P. G. D. Farr)
		Wing Commander, Commanding,
		No. 358 Squadron, R.A.F.