

March 1945: Form 540

358 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
R.A.F. Stn. Jessore	1945 March		X-Operations
	1		Operation Order No. 22
	2		Operation Order No. 23
	3		Operation Order No. 24
	4		Operation Order No. 25
	5		Operation Order No. 26
	9		Operation Order No. 27
	10		Operation Order No. 28
	11		Operation Order No. 29
	12		Operation Order No. 30
	13		Operation Order No. 31
	14		Operation Order No. 32
	15		Operation Order No. 33
	17		Operation Order No. 34
	19		Operation Order No. 35
	20		Operation Order No. 36
	22		Operation Order No. 37
	24		Operation Order No. 38
	26		Operation Order No. 39
	28		Operation Order No. 40
	29		Operation Order No. 41
	30		Operation Order No. 42
			Summary
			Liberators Mark VI. of 358 Squadron were airborne during March a total of 1,339 hours. Of this 1,264 hours 05 minutes was operational flying, 75 hours were taken up with non-operational flying, including flying to and from advanced landing grounds for operations. Training in the air absorbed but a fraction of the total; 16 hours 10 minutes.
			Operations.
			Operational sorties during the month totalled 115. Of these 82 were completed, making a percentage of 71.3%.
			Failure to complete 33 sorties was caused mainly by the absence of receptions when the aircraft arrived over the DZs and, secondly, due to bad weather. These failures are classified as follow:
			No reception 14. Weather 11. Wrong Reception 2.
			Capt's lack of confidence 3. Engine Failure 2. Crash 1.
			With the arrival of the moon period toward the end of the month it became clear that the Squadron was finding its feet in the specialised sphere of Special Duties. On four of five alternate "days" 12 aircraft operated and 10 on the fifth with a high percentage of success.
			A variety of commitments took crews far afield; supplies were dropped as far away from base as French Indo China and Malaya. The average length of sortie was 11 hours 24 minutes, but the record was made at the beginning of the month when F/Lt. Jones logged 20 hours 39 mins for a trip to a target in

			Malaya.			
			Unlike bombing or strafing missions where crews can see the results of their task, these operations were mainly carried out at night and invariably over small targets hidden among hills. Thus, the results of a drop were not always seen, and crews were ever on the watch for reports from the field describing the success or otherwise of any particular operation. But, to the inevitable disappointment of some crews, each and every operation was not covered later by a report from the field. However, most crews were able to see some results as shown in the following reports, some of which also refer to aircraft of 357 Squadron which occasionally operated at the same time over the same DZ.			
				Sorties		
			Captain	S.	U.	Percentage, field reports, etc.
			S/L. Sharpe 100%	9	--	2nd: Wolf 6: "Plane heard 20 miles to west at 2315 hrs. Second visible over DZ at 0035 hrs. Fires well lit. No, rpt. no drop. Report just received states stores dropped NE of DZ in China. Investigating. Later report dated 8th – have found 11 containers in jungle 15 miles north".
						1/4th: Ferret & Otter: "Liberator tactics & accuracy perfect. Dakota high. One package only on DZ."
						26th. Two containers smashed.
			F/L. Monks 100%	9	--	20th: Otters: Last night successful drop. Drop too high. Forth Lib released too early (Otter 9 or 12).
						26th: H/Lynx: Drop received at dusk. Thanks for good drop. Two containers smashed.
						1/4th: Mongoos: "Good drop by Dakota. One Lib dropped high: 1 Lib did not drop.
			P/O. Heley 88.8%	8	1	20th: Otter – "Last night successful drop. Drop too high. 4th Lib. released too early".
						22nd: Tambourine – "Successful"
						30th: Walrus – "what went wrong with drop? One Lib only dropped but 3 containers found 5 miles away."
			W/O. Bullen 88.8%	8	1	1/4th – Walrus: "Many thanks RAF, good drop. Unfortunately this DZ blown."
			F/L. Jones 80%	8	2	20th. Otter: "Successful drop. Too high. 4th Lib too early (9 or 12).
						19th Bazr: "10 cs found by natives 30 miles SE of DZ."
						28th Otter: "Ammo dropped by Lib excellent. Thank you".
						29th Hyena: "Two libs dropped fantastically & unnecessarily high, well in trees. No hills in DZ. South sides are 800'. Third Lib very late & Japs close & active so could not remain. All except 2 chutes found today."
			F/L. Davison 60%	6	4	24th: "picked up 15 conts. 19 pkgs."
			F/L. Bridges 66.6%	6	3	30th: Walrus – "what went wrong with drop? 1 lib only dropped but 3 conts. found 5 miles

						away."
						1st: "We believe A/C failed to reach us; weather here fairly good."
			W/O. Martel 33.3%	3	6	20th: Hippo – "Thanks for excellent drop."
						24th: Otter – "Will try to give RAF better dropping mark. Am clearing jungle & having fifth fire in centre rectangle."
						29th: Hyena – "Two libs dropped fantastically & unnecessarily high all in trees...." (See Farr & Jones).
			F/O. Smith 71.4%	5	2	20th: "Wireless set out of order last few days. Now OK."
						24th: Otter – "Will try to give RAF better dropping mark. Am clearing jungle & having fifth fire in centre rectangle."
						1/4th – Walrus: "Many thanks. RAF good drop. Unfortunately this DZ blown."
			W/O. Drummond 71.4%	5	2	28th: Muslin – "Disappointed at failure last night. A/C heard but turned north short of DZ."
			W/O. Mills	3	3	3rd: - "We got supplies OK last night in all 14 chutes.
						23rd: Chiffon also – Got two chutes today making total of 16 & hope to find last one shortly. Next time please request pilot to try & drop in DZ area which is big enough for any drop."
			W/O. Adams 80%	4	1	22nd: Weasel – "Your Lib came over DZ last night. Lights shown but no drop. What happened? DZ or engine trouble If DZ will choose another. Come tomorrow. If engine trouble come tonight will show lights.
						26th: - See Mills, Sharpe.
						30th: Chiffon – "We presume one A/C came last night but stores dropped have not been found. It is important that the pilot must not drop supplies when no flashes from torches seen."
			W/C. Farr 60%	3	2	20th: Last night successful drop. Drop too high. 4th Lib. released too early (Otter 9 or 12).
						29th: Hyena – "Two libs dropped fantastically & unnecessarily high etc....." (See Jones, Martel).
			W/O. Jones	2	2	3rd: Taffeta – "Two chutes lost. Environment searched but not found. Must have sunk in water."
						22nd: Hyena – "Plane circled over DZ, Lights on for 40 mins from 2130 but no drop. If ours advise it try stick river course from Pyaganpu If not our plane, DZ is now definitely compromised."
			F/L. Robinson	3	--	28th: Walrus – "Bodies & 1 lib arms arrived safely. Bods fell 300 yds from DZ. Lib drop good."
						1st: Chiffon: "we believe A/C failed to reach us altho' weather conditions here were fairly

					good."
			F/O. Murray ¹		
					Serviceability.
					There was a marked improvement in aircraft serviceability during the month brought about by the arrangement to operate six aircraft on alternate days. This gave the ground crews a better chance and very few technical failures resulted. Several forced landings took place during the month. W/Cdr. Farr landed KH271 at Cox's Bazaar on 3 engines; W/O. Martel force landed at Cox's Bazaar after jettisoning his load in the sea west of Cox's Bazaar. "T" (W/O. Martel) force landed at Kunming.
					Good co-operation between the aircrews and the ground crews on their aircraft was very evident. Outstanding N.C.O.'s on Servicing being Sgts. Bushrod and Broadhurst who, between them, serviced four aircraft, ('C', 'G', 'D' and 'A'), in "A" Flight. Aircraft 'A', 'D' and 'K' now proved invaluable for operations by "A" Flight. 'A' was used on 13 sorties and 'D' and 'K' on 8 each.
					Aircrews, "A" Flight.
					F/Lt. Bridges was detached on a Radio Range Course for 5 days and W/O. Jones was taken off flying for rest for 3 weeks. Most of the flying was carried out by S/Ldr. Sharp (F/Cdr.), F/Lt. Davison, F/L. Monks, F/L. Bridges and W/O. Martel and crews. W/O. Martel was singularly unfortunate during the month experiencing failure of compass, engines and high fuel consumption, reducing his successes to 3. This W/O has been repatriated and his crew posted to No. 357 Squadron.
					A new crew, (Capt) F/O. Roe arrived from Kolar and after a short period of training on the Squadron, will soon be ready for operations.
					Aircrews, "B" Flight.
					The number of crews flying was eight until F/O. Murray was withdrawn from flying, leaving seven crews. All crews worked hard. Most of the flying was carried out by P/O. Hedley, F/L. Jones and F/O. Smith. W/O. Mills was killed with all his crew on 25.3.45 leaving 6 crews.
					F/Lt. Mayger joined the Flight on 18.3.45 and commenced training the next day. F/S. Matthews commenced training on 18.3.45. Owing to operational commitments intensive training was not possible, but these two captains should be operational by the next moon period.
					On one occasion due to crew shortage, an aircraft was flown by a crew of no. 357 Squadron.
					Navigation:
					Navigation in the Flights has been excellent, only two Navigational failures being reported.
					General:
					The shortage of trained 1st Pilots has proved a considerable handicap. The lack of accurate maps, particularly of the French Indo-China area, was a great disadvantage. Crews very often expecting a comparatively flat terrain at DZ were amazed to find peaks up to 7000' jutting up through the cloud. It is suggested that suitable crews carry cameras to photograph glaring differences between natural failures and mapped but surveyed areas.

¹ There is an entry for F/O. Murray at the bottom of the page, only the name is visible on the microfilm.

R.A.F. Station Jessore	1945 March	
		II – Administrative.
	30	All aircrew personnel transferred from billets in Jessore town to Santola (New Camp) where they will be jointly messed with aircrew of 357 Sqdn. The vacated N.C.Os billets filled by Squadron BORs who up to now have been living in tents.
		III – Personnel.
	4	F/O. R. W. Robinson (GD.(P).) promoted Flight Lieut. w.e.f. 6.12.44.
	11	Nominations requested for first personnel to proceed to U.K., on leave scheme ex India 407 LAC. Milner, W and 687 LAC Davies, J. D. selected by ballot.
	15	F/O. Roe and crew arrived from Poona. P/O. T. D. Taylor promoted F/O. w.e.f. 1.9.44. P/O. J. A. Chitty promoted F/O. w.e.f. 25.11.44. P/O. L. C. Bartlett promoted F/O. w.e.f. 16.12.44. P/O. W. H. Bull promoted F/O. w.e.f. 16.12.44. P/O. H. J. A. Johnson (missing) promoted F/O. w.e.f. 16.12.44. F/O. N. W. Pemberton promoted Flight Lieut. w.e.f. 10.12.44. P/O. J. C. Stuart promoted F/O. w.e.f. 20.7.44.
	18	F/Lt. Mayger arrived on posting from Amarda Road.
	24	54090. F/O. M. R. Davison, G.D.(P) appointed Acting Flight. Lieut. w.e.f. 8.2.45 on filling Dep. Flight Commander 'A' Flight post. F/O. K. W. Jones (175032) GD(P). appointed Acting Flight Lieut. w.e.f. 1.2.45 on appointment as Captain of aircraft. F/O. S. J. Brace (162856) GD(Gnr.Sigs) appointed Acting Flight Lieut. W.E.F. 8.2.45 on filling Squadron Gunnery (Sigs) vacancy.
	25	Liberator VI. Kh397 took off from base at 0530 hours but collided with trees at S. End of runway and crashed in flames in the native village of Bakkutia The aircraft was a completer 'Write off', Category E.O. Burnt total. All the crew were killed, and were interred in the European Cemetery, Jessore (Map Ref. 2311N 8911E) at 1800 hors the same day. Full service honours were accorded. The Station Chaplain, S/L. (Rev) John Scott, Conducted the ceremony.
		Personnel Killed.
		1108628. W/O. W. R. Mils. Captain.
		1604264 F/Sgt. Loveless, L. C. 2nd Pilot
		F/O. T. D. Taylor G.D.(A/B)
		R.93615 W/O. Hencher, S. E. Nav.
		1623858 Sgt. Young, C. C. WOP/A
		1795301 Sgt. Rowe, G. D. T. WOP/A
		1301823 F/Sgt. Hawkins, J. F. A/G.
		1826585 Sgt. Potter, D. S. A/G.
		634691 Sgt. Hulse, J. L. J. A/G.
		The aircraft crashed in the midst of the village of Bakkutia and considerable Civilian Casualties and damage occurred. 8 civilians were killed and 10 injured and 10 houres and 7 cattle were destroyed in the resulting fire.
		IV – Honours and Awards.
		W/O. A. E. Dennard (Fitter I) mentioned in Despatches London Gazette dated 1.1.45.

			V. – General.
			Air Marshal Sir Keith P. Park, KCB, KBE, MC, DFC, Allied Air Commander in Chief, Air Command, S.E. Asia visited the Squadron on a tour of Inspection.
			O.C. ordered a General 'Standown' for the Squadron after strenuous 'Moon Period'.
			Small Pox scare – all personnel vaccinated.
			Summary.
			Personnel Strength:
			Officers 51 – SNCOs 233 – BORs 474 – IORs 20 – E/Fs 66. Total – 844.
			Ops Record Book of 358 Sqdn. Medical Officer Eng. Officer & Signals – Appendices Nos 22,23, 24.