

Appendix No. 34 to No. 358 Squadron F.540 January 1945

From:- Officer in Medical Charge, 358 Squadron R.A.F.

To:- Officer Commanding, 358 Squadron, R.A.F.

Ref:- 358 Squadron/2022/Med.

Date:- 17-2-45

Operations Record Book. F540
Squadron Medical History

- ?¹-12-44. 1872382. L.A.C. King. W. E. V. posted as Nursing Orderly.
- ?-12-44. 1530864. L.A.C. Murgatroyd. J. and 1626907 L.A.C. Thorpe. W. P. posted as Nursing Orderlies.
- ?-12-44. 1101695. Cpl. Callister. J. posted as N.C.O. i/c. M.I. Room of the Squadron.
- ?-12-44. 169958. F/O. Halliday. R. assumed duty as Squadron Medical Officer. Effective date of posting 4-12-44.

The present report covers the period from the 24-12-44 to 31-1-45.

Sick Parades were held at 08-00 hours daily, and during the period were as follows:-

	No on Sick Parade	No of Visits During Period.	Average No of Visits Per Person.
Officers	10	20	2.0
N.C.Os (Air)	41	133	3.2
All Ground Personnel	137	353	2.5
Totals	188	506	2.56

The most common types of disorders seen and treated were septic skin infections, bowel disorders (diarrhoea and vomiting), common colds, sore throats, fevers where no diagnosis was made after all investigations, various eye disorders and various types of accident cases.

During the same period admissions to S.S.Q. and to Hospital were of this order:-

	Officers	N.C.Os. (air)	Ground Personnel
S.S.Q.	Nil.	10	24
Hospital	1	5	15
Totals	1	15	39

As there were approx 740 personnel on this squadron (exclusive of enrolled followers and civilian employees not included in the above record) this means 7.8% were hospitalised during this time. Of conditions requiring admission the greatest number were suffering from various forms of skin diseases (10 in number) followed by tonsillitis cases (6) eye disorders (4) venereal diseases (3) and then dengue, dysentery, enteritis, hysteria, eye infections and lung disorders follow with 2 cases of each. there was only the (1) case of malaria as was to be expected at this season.

¹ Date is unknown as left side of document is "cut off" on microfilm.

Sanitation

On arrival at R.A.F. Station Digri it was found that many of the latrines had either been burned down or were otherwise unserviceable and a great deal of work was done to remedy these defects. Ablutions were improved by the addition of further showers and wash benches; billets were supplied with electric lighting; and cook-houses and mess buildings white-washed and other general repairs e.g. fly proofing effected. The usual troubles with drains and grease traps was found and after initial difficulties of sweeper labour has been overcome. These were kept in a fairly satisfactory condition this connecting tribute may be paid to the good work done by Cpl Fisk NCO i/c Sanitation he did a good job under difficult conditions.

The water supply was good and was chlorinated under Station supervision. at times chlorination appeared to be in excess but this a fault on the right side even if it made the water taste slightly unpalatable.

The food was good and no complaints were heard as for either the quality or quantity. This again is a tribute to the cooks, as the shortage of labour, at least in the initial stages was acute and was never fully resolved. without full establishment for cook-house personnel (especially G.O.R. cooks) it is impossible to adhere to the dictation of Headquarters R.A.F. Bengal/Burma as laid down in their letter Bur/4266/Med/68B of 19-1-45 stating that in future therefore no mess is to be run with less than two (2) B.O.R. cooks.

Difficulty was experienced in obtaining a requisite number of charpoys for all Squadron personnel and this was not overcome due to the fact that the sites that the Squadron were occupying had in the past received a large allocation of them. As 358 Squadron were not responsible for their deficiency found it impossible to understand why we should have been made to suffer the loss, but Station equipment store would not issue a full number and we were at times about 30 charpoys deficient. The effects of sleeping on cement, where all of insects are crawling around, and where it is difficult to maintain a safe net as in anti-malarial precaution may be imagined. The high incidence of skin infections on the daily sick parade was practically explained. Under these conditions in the malarial season no doubt there would have been a large number of cases of malaria, and this is quite apart from the various rheumatic types of complaints which might arise and could be partially traced to condition of service, which might involve the question of pension for any disabilities of this nature accrued.

Air Operations.

Eleven operational sorties were carried out by the squadron in its first operational period. Of these the first was a daylight bombing raid and was quite uneventful, except to the enemy.

Unfortunately on the second operation (during the night of 22nd 23rd January, when the duties of the Squadron had been changed) out of eleven aircraft and crews, three failed to return, very bad weather being experienced. There was nothing of interest to record, apart from the question of oxygen supplies during the rest of this operational period, in spite of the fact that within ten days many members of crews flew approximately ninety hours, and often in bad weather.

The work this squadron is doing involved flights of up to eighteen hours duration at night and over country which is often uncharted and where heights of mountains have been found to be totally wrong so that aircraft must fly at greater heights than anticipated and must always fly at oxygen requiring heights which at night is 8000 feet and over. Sudden changes of plans and various other operational difficulties resulted in a lack of all oxygen supplying apparatus to both aircraft and personnel during the first few operations but this defect was speedily remedied when it was discovered at debriefing that oxygen lack was exhibited by various members of crews. Much private propaganda was carried out to make aircrew oxygen conscious and it is hoped that lectures on the use of oxygen may be given before the next operational period is begun.

Caffeine tablets were issued to those who desired them, with instructions as to their use, and seemed to have some effect in counteracting fatigue though it was strongly suggested that continuous use of oxygen was much the best method.

There were no cases of fatigue or neuropsychois among aircrew, but two cases of hysteria were seen in ground personnel.

General Remarks.

The health of the squadron was fairly good during this period and it is hoped that it will continue to remain so. Many difficulties were experienced due to movements and other operational requirements but these were in process of being smoothed out. The main difficulty from the medical standpoint is the maintenance of good sanitation and hygiene for this adequate labour is essential, and a sufficient sanitary squad to supervise the work which is constant and urgent. Cookhouses and cookhouse personnel require close supervision, plus enough space and materials in which to work so that food always remain of a high quality and of sufficient quantity. Suggestions on these lines have been made in the ordinary Sanitation and Hygiene reports.

(R. Halliday) F/O
Officer in Medical Charge
358 Squadron, R.A.F.

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F.540 – Signals Section – January, 1945.

The Signals Section along with the rest of the Squadron moved from R.A.F. Station, Kolar to R.A.F. Station, Digri.

Although on arrival at Digri the Section was informed of an imminent move to R.A.F. Station, Jessore, a test-rig to cover all wireless equipment, except V.H.F. and R.A's, was assembled in the workshop. Owing to limited accommodation available, the Radar and W.T. Sections had to operate from the same workshop.

An attempt was made to have V.H.F. – R/T. equipment (with which 11 aircraft are fitted) serviceable for the Squadron's first Daylight operation but owing to lack of test equipment and the impossibility of procuring same, the equipment could not be used.

For the particular type of operations upon which the Squadron was engaged, the facilities afforded by the use of the Radio Altimeter installation was essential. As no test equipment was held by the Radar Section a Group Radar Officer visited the Squadron in order to make an initial calibration of the Altimeter with the aid of test equipment brought with him. Results obtained with this installation by the Squadron while on operations was unsatisfactory. Technical information has since been received that these Altimeters are unreliable at the altitude most required by this Squadron, viz. 600 – 800 feet.

During the whole operational period of January no snags of a major nature were encountered and the equipment during these operations was maintained at a high standard of serviceability.

On arrival at Digri all Signals briefing and Flying facilities were extracted by this Section, 80 percent of the Briefings were carried out by the Signals Leader and the remainder by 185 Wing Signals Officer.

On the Daylight Operation to Mandalay on 13th January, 1945 the wind velocity and direction was passed by the leading aircraft five minutes before reaching the target both by W/T and R/T.

A Distress Signal was transmitted by Aircraft 'D' but no reply was received by the Aircraft which eventually landed safely.

A new Identification procedure was adopted for this Squadron's use as follows:-

- If successful and early – E + mins.
- If unsuccessful and early – mins. + E.

The letter 'L' was used in place of 'E' if the aircraft was to be late.

The standard of air operating was satisfactory.

Appendix No. 36 to No. 358 Squadron F.540 for January 1945

Summary. Bombing Section. 358 Squadron. January, 1945.

It being intended that the Squadron would be operating as a Daylight Formation Bomber Unit, opportunity was taken during the first week after the Squadron's arrival to bring the bombing efficiency of the lead crews to the highest possible standard.

As far as general serviceability would permit, this was carried out satisfactorily, the result being the dropping of 188 practice bombs on the Arabari Bombing Range with reasonably good results.

The Squadron, on Jan. 13th. was put to it's first test by being detailed to take part in the mission which was the opening of the Battle of Mandalay. This was the largest raid yet conducted in South East Asia Command, the Squadron's contribution being seven aircraft carrying the following total load:-

20 X 1000 lb. G. P. Bombs.
40 X 500 Incendiary Clusters.
90 X M 30 100 lb. H. E. Bombs.
10 X M 47 100 lb. Incendiary Bombs.

P.R.. Sortie Reports of the raid are not yet to hand, but it is considered, from crew interrogation, that the majority of the 1000 lb. G. P. Bombs and the 5000 Incendiaries found their target. The 100 lb. H. E. and Incendiary Bombs, because of a technical failure due to the method of attaching several bombs to the one bomb hook, had to be either jettisoned on the return flight or brought back to Base.

On January 14th, the Squadron was selected for S.D. work, so while the training for this work was being carried out, opportunity was taken to have all the bomb-sights taken from the aircraft and ground calibrated, in order that the Squadron efficiency from the bomb-sight point of view would be at it's peak in the event of further bombing operations.

These came in the form of a cover-bombing sortie on the night of January 27th, when two aircraft took off to attack the Japanese airfield Udaun Thani in Assam. One aircraft, because of bad weather, failed to reach the target, while the second aircraft (Capt. P/O. Hedley. B/A. Sgt. Hounslow) successfully attacked with 9 500 Incendiary Clusters and 6 100 lb. Demolition Bombs. Reports from the Field indicate that, in addition to Japanese barracks being burnt down, 5 motor vehicles and an oil installation were also set alight. The oil dump was reported to be still burning on 30 Jan., 45.