

The Diary of F/Sgt. P. Squires, Flight Engineer, giving details of his operational flights.

159 Sqdn.

Operation No 1 Bangkok. 19-1-44

Time in Air. 13 ¼ hrs. Time to A.L.G. 1.40

Total Time 14.55

Distance in Air Miles – 2384. Pilot. Sgt. Cox.

This operation is so far is the longest undertaken in any theatre of war. Was very boring and monotonous. Started a very large fire. No fighters encountered. Searchlights were few. Didn't see any flack personally though gunners said they saw some. Landed at base with only 200 gallons. Guess we were lucky we didn't get lost.

Operation No 2 Mingaladon 31-1-44.

time in Air 10 ½ hrs. Pilot F/Sgt. Murphy (Aust).

Distance in air miles – 1846.

Took off in fairly decent weather. Encountered heavy rain and cloud over the Bay of Bengal. The 4 engines cut momentarily (guess it was due to ignition short). Stooaged over target area for over an hour but failed to locate target due to weather. Decided to bomb Prome, again failed to locate, so bombs were jettisoned. Thought we were flying over the Bay on the way home but were flying over the Chin Hills. Lucky we decided to fly above the rain or else we would have done a spot of tunnelling. Got hopelessly lost. Eventually find our selves up by Jesore. (only 150 – 200 miles out in navigating). Petrol got low, was very glad when we found base. Op on the whole was a wash-out.

Jays. Lib VI.

Operation 3. Mingaladon 3.3.44

Time in air 9.15 W/O Murphy. Capt.

Distance in air miles 1750. 167. G.P.H.

Four squadrons took part. Took off rather later (10.30) and reached target at about 03 o'clock. Opposition was slight, saw no E/A. Wasted no unnecessary time over target area. Was troubled over lack of fuel on return journey, however the worry was needless. Weather was cloudy but nevertheless we pranged the dispersal areas.

Operation 4. Mogaung. 10.3.44.

Time in air 9 hrs. W/O Murphy. Cpt.

Distance in air miles.<sup>1</sup> 163. G.P.H.

This is the first time for us to attack this target. Aircraft took off at hourly intervals, we were No 3. Weather was very clear except for electrical storm in vicinity of target. The raid was army support work and nuisance value. Found target after a considerable search. Navigator dropped

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<sup>1</sup> Distance not given in diary.

bombs in salvo instead of 2 – 3 – 2. got lost on the return journey and were 2 hours overdue. On the whole for us it was a wash out but the rest of the boys did pretty well.

Operation 5. Victoria Lake Supply dump (Rangoon). 14.3.44.  
W/O Murphy.  
Distance in Air Miles. 1810 165.5 G.P.H.

Very late take off – weather good. arrived at target 03.30. Plenty fires burning, our bombs landed smack in fires (beautiful sight). Few searchlights and flak. Rear gunner saw fighter at 500 yds. Didn't open up us thank God. Fires seen 80 miles away. On the whole raid was very successful. Got a big kick out of it.

Operation 6. Ywataung Aero. 16.3.44.  
7.20 hrs. 1900. 149. G.P.H. W/O Murphy.

Late take off. Weather good no opposition. Did two runs over runways. Dropped bombs in two sticks, both sticks hit runways. Quite the easiest op so far.

Operation 7 Moulmein 4.4.44.  
11 hrs. 2000 galls. 154 G.P.H. W/O Murphy

Took off at 10.30 at night, some heavy guns opened up at us approx half hour from target, few bursts came unpleasantly close, took evasive action. arrived at target 03.20, no searchlights but anti-aircraft fire. Tires were seen. Bombs burst in target area.

Operation 8 Moulmein 8.4.44.  
10 hrs 45 mins. 2,000 168 G.P.H. W/O Murphy

Took off at 6.30. Weather going out was wizo. Arrived at target 11.45, took new navigator along, bags of confidence, no piss balling about just straight in, bombs gone. On leaving target heavy A.A. gun opened up from Battery Point, japs had finger in. Bags of fuel and arrived at drome dead on E.T.A. afraid bombs burst South of target. Some more paddy fields gone for a burton.

Operation 9 Ywataung 18.4.44  
9.05 hrs. 2000 galls. 169 G.P.H. W/O Murphy

Took off at 5.30 and ran slap bang into a thunder storm. For ten minutes all was in the balance, had to give all power to maintain air speed, at one time we were forced to 400'. We were tossed about like a sock in the water. However all's well that ends well Flew on to find target shrouded by heavy ground mist, unable to locate actual target (railway yards) so dropped load on Sagaing. Guess some unfortunates died before their time, whereas some lived that should have died. Such is Fate. Everything went off OK except for batteries and voltage regulators overheating. (P.S.) While in the storm certainly had the impression that the doors were opening for us. As bombs burst a peculiar colour flash occurred. Could it be the flash and bomb bursting simultaneously? Another thing was that we never saw any of the incendiaries explode. did the River Irrawaddy claim them?

Operation 10 Moulmein 23.4.44  
11.00 hrs. 2000 galls. 144.5 G.P.H. W/O Murphy

Took off at daylight (4 o'clock), weather was fair, arrived at target area about 9.20. made a wizard bombing run but bombs hung up. Len was on cat-walk, not plugged in neither was I so Spud was unaware of hang-up. Afraid he showed lack of humour when informed. Caused us to make another two runs. Still twas for the best because think we hit the jetties. First bomb fell in river so Japs had fish for meals. did some good. On return journey ran into storm over Khawaqpur, rather grim but Spud got us through. Alls well that ends well.

Operation 11 Imphal-Tiddim Rd. 11.6.44  
4 Hrs. 50 mins. W/O Murphy.

This was the first daylight mission for our crew so we were sceptical. Took off early and formatted above the 'drome. Weather was very cloudy all way and over the target. No fighter opposition or flak encountered. Brought bombs back. On the whole a very dull but cold show.

Operation 12 Imphal – Tiddim Rd. 14.6.44  
5.20 W/O. Murphy

Again a very early take-off weather was very cloudy as before but luck favoured us with a gap of the target area. No opposition. this target has been very costly, has been numerous sorties but mostly all fruitless. However this time we pranged it. Dropped two sticks smack across road.

Operation 13. Maymyo 6.7.44.  
7.25 2,000 galls. 195 G.P.H. W/O. Murphy.

Our first night op since April. A very late take off due to met forecast Weather on the whole was good though we climbed to 14,000' to clear cloud. Went to Sanging for a pin point, ack ack opened up at us, OK for direction but too low. At Maymyo the yards were hidden by cloud though town was visible. Decided to bash Mandalay where visibility was good. Did 5 runs over town despite fact that flak was getting more accurate. each time. Guess people at Mandalay will be glad when weather clears over Maymyo for due to bad visibility this is their third raid this month. Hope the P.O.W. get a kick out of it. Navigator is confident that we pranged yards with 1st stick.

Operation 14. Mandalay. 26.7.44.  
6.55 2,000 galls. 182. G.P.H. W/O. Murphy.

Were briefed for Mandalay but were given orders that should cloud cover give out there we were to prang any of half a dozen targets.

Fist op of its kind to be done on this squadron. Took off at 06.15 and headed out to target. After approx 15 minutes flying fabric on Port Elevator gave way and began to tear, eventually made quite a big hole. Pilot decided to bomb nearest target which was Kaleneya. This target subsequently covered by too much cloud to enable any visibility. Pushed on to Monywa where

cloud cover was nil. Target was quite open. Did first bombing run at 10.05 but bombs hung up, by this time flak was coming up pretty heavy, was OK for direction but height not so good (hope it keeps that way). Did second run at 10.12 but bombs over shot Rly Stn by 20 yds (tough luck). Light & heavy flak bursting so decided twas time to push off. Had an F24 Camera to operate. Shots came out quite good though failed to catch our own bombs bursting. Filmed bomb damage of a previous a/c. Burst on Rly lines. On the whole a good show, looking forward to the next.

Operation 15 Moulmein 2.8.44  
11.20 2400g W/O. Murphy.

Quite a big do actually. Eight a/c on mining with 4 a/c on bombing (to cause diversion). Took off at 16.20 and ran into bad weather, the met forecast as per usual all to cock, hit the Burma Coast 1 hour before time, subsequently had to stooage around for that length of time. Arrived at target 9.58 and commenced mining run. Speed was low, to low for comport, skimmed across Battery point at 20', rear gunner swears he could count the leaves on the trees. Bruce had finger in, for mines hung up. Spud disobeyed orders by doing a second run, this time slightly higher, mines went off OK. Flak was coming up nice and heavy, so gave a/c all she had and got away. Bombing diversion was not so successful for funs still fired at us. A/c G had piece shot out of the fin while tow a/c were in the fertilizer over Rangoon. On the whole a good trip, though weather was bad.

P.S. Believe Honghton (mid-upper) had a slight attack of L.tiwttter.

Operation 16. Mergui. 13.8.44.  
13.25. 2600g. W/O Murphy

Another mining operation, 12 a/c took off at 06.00. Weather to target fair. Reached target area 12.00 but due to bad visibility had to stooage around to find a break, wasn't very healthy hugging the point, plenty of islands with mountain tops over 500'. Started bombing run 1235 but mines hung up. Consequently did a second run. Flak very light and erratic. Two destroyers and one submarine were reported to have been seen. On the whole the trip was very boring. Too long over water.

Operation 17. Tavoy. 16.8.44.  
12.40. 2500 F/O. Garden.

Another daylight mining operation, this time a 100 miles north of Mergui. Twelve a/c took off, 0600 hours. About 2 hours after leaving base No4 Engine began acting rough. Revs began to fluctuate between 1800-2500, boost dropped off and Fuel pressure. Vibrations set up also, every indication that engine was detonating. Placed mixture in rich, vibration and rev fluctuations still continued but had decreased slightly. Elevator on George u/s. Weather was deadly, flew across the bay at average of 500' on both journeys. a/c nearly stalled at height of 300' Twasn't very funny. Eventually reached target area, after stooaging around islands at very low altitude. Did bombing run, no opposition, guess visibility was to bad for us to be seen. Was a bit worried over petrol on return journey, recon we landed with 300 gallons.

PS. this was F/O Garden's first long trip as a Captain, came through with flying colours.

Operation 18. Port Blair. 28.8.44.  
11.05. 2500. W/O Murphy.

Another mine-laying affair. T'was touch and go whether our particular a/c would go on the op. No 4 tank developed a leak, however was given 30 minutes grace after the last a/c. Prior to take off wind changed direction which meant changing runway. During waiting period 4 a/c became u/s due to idling of engines for 1 hour. We took off 30 minutes after last a/c and was cleared down runway by ground staff. Bolted out at speed of 170-175 to make up for lost time. Over target area R.Gnr reported smell of petrol. discovered that No3 tank had transferred into No4 and lost 100-150 galls. Soon stopped that. Did two runs. First run, ack/ack was fairly intense, heavy stuff under Stbd wing while light stuff at rear, too dammed accurate to be comfortable. Second run not a shot fired. Queer? F/O Garden went for a burton. Took 3 spares with him. Guess there's no future in this flying racket.

Operation 19. Goh Sichang Harbour. 4.9.44.  
14.20. 2230 2650G. 150 G.P.H. W/O Murphy.

Another mine-laying. A small harbour S.E. of Bangkok. Distance 2230. (too far too walk back). Took off 1800 hours. Weather wasn't too bad, broken Cu. Flack seen N. of track, due S of Moulmerine. a/c mixed up with convoy. Passed over fair sized town E side of Malay Peninsula. a/c behind got nasty reception. No flak on bombing run. Returned to base – no incidents. Few a/c had flak pumped up. Wc a/c hit. Main tyre burst by bullet.

Operation 20. Victoria Point. 9.9.44.  
14.35. 2650 143 G.P.H. W/O Murphy.

This is by far the longest daylight raid ever undertaken in this theatre. Took off at 6 in morning. While at Southern tip of Burma, navigator spotted fighter coming out to intercept – recon we lost him in the clouds. Arrived at target area 12.38. Visibility OK, dropped mines and climbed like clappers to clear range of mountains. Some a/c spotted & seaplanes at anchorage, had a smack at them. Passing S. of Burma on return journey, Rear gunner called up "Four fighters". Guess they didn't see us, nevertheless a slight case of R.T. Hit e storms on return journey, not a pleasant experience. Threw us off track, and caused us to be heading for Calcutta. Reckon they took a dim view of us for they picked us up with searchlights. Landed at 'drome to learn news that one a/c had crashed on take off. All killed. A very bad show. Was lucky we lost fighters because we only carried rear gunner, wouldn't have stood much chance.

Operation 21. Mergui (??) 16.9.44  
12.45. 2500g W/O Murphy.

This was Spuds last trip, he finished as he began – in the shit. Early take-off, minelaying daylight. Weather on way out pretty grim, came down to 200' near target area, couldn't see a thing. Bruce called up to turn quickly, mountain in way, a/c nearly stalled, just missed mountain. Shakey do. No point in staying there so went up to Tavoy where weather was OK, dropped stuff

and turned for home. Flew into a couple of storms, were diverted to Alipore where we had to sleep in the a/c, nearly bitten to death by mosquitoes.

Operation 22. Myitnge 24.9.44  
8.15. 2100 W/O. Hendy

We were P.F. for this bombing operation. Took off 15 mins before other a/c & arrived at target area 30 mins before time. Saw target, about to drop T.I when some one dropped flares, blinded us. Eventually dropped two T.I.'s. Altogether did 10 runs, 1 hour over target. Light ack ack fired at us, but some one laid a stick across it, on whole flack moderate, a fairly good show. Did two overshoots on landing.

Operation 23 Uttaradit Pinsaulore Rly. 5.10.44.  
13.05. W/O. Hendy.

This was a train busting and strafing job. took off at midnight, arrived over target at dawn 05.40. Did three runs over Uttaradit Rly Stn. In it were 3 Loco's, so strafed and bombed each run. Nose gunner claimed hits on all engines, also shot up Barracks. From height of 40'. Stooged up the line looking for fresh targets, found goods train so dropped two sticks of bombs also strafed. Used all bombs, not much ammo left so left for home. Over bay picked up S.O.S. from an a/c from A flight. Didn't have sufficient juice to stooge around – pity. On return learned that one a/c was in drink and Leo Barr missing. Of the four a/c in our section, two were shot up and 1 missing. We were the only ones not to be hit. Guess we were lucky.  
P.S. Dinghys were sighted by searching a/c.

Op. 24<sup>2</sup>

Op. 25. Ve Esty. 17.10.44  
13.05 2550 W/O Hendy.

Early morning take off. Weather fair. Nothing much to report. Just in and out.

OP. 26. Victoria Pt. 20.10.44  
14.30. 2650 W/O. Hendy.

Early take off. Weather on way out pretty grim. arrived at target area to find a storm in progress had great difficulty in finding target. Eventually found same, on way out fired at but not hit, some a/c were, passed over three seaplanes at anchor, Rear gunner took shots but distance too great. I took photos. Not too bad a show.

OP. 27. Penang. 27.10.44  
19.00. 3760 3,000 W/O. Hendy.

As far as the squadron was concerned this was the op of a lifetime. 3000 files to go with just enough juice to do it. Plenty of speculation going on. Air sea rescue was ready in shape of

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<sup>2</sup> This operation is not listed in the diary; A/C was recalled, and total flight time was only 3.30.

destroyers and two submarines, lying on route. So we were confident if we did have to ditch, we stood a good chance of being picked up. Took off from Khaigpen, better runway. Took off at 10 & reached target area at 19.30. Weather was pretty good. Received shock at target, expected to be met by bags of gun-fire – not a shot fired. Were we shaken but glad, didn't fancy return journey with leaky tanks. Took decision that we had enough juice to make base. Landed with a couple hundred galls and very very tired. Still was a good show. Some thing to talk about to the kids in years to come.

The squadron received congratulatory letter from Lord Louis Mountbatten, General Arnold, chief of U.S. Airforce, and Lords of Admiralty. The longest raid ever undertaken by any a/c in any theatre of war up till then. If we had been in Blighty would have received gongs – but who cares.

Op. 28. Bangkok 4.11.44  
14.05. 2400<sup>3</sup>

Take off was at tea-time. This was to be my last "op", so can I be blamed if I was a little – "shaky". A lot depended upon it. Maybe it was coincidence or Fate – that I was t finish on the target that I had begun. For this, we had practised for a week on the bombing range. Learning Dive bombing was a hit – another of "Group Capt. Cheshire's" ideas. the outward half was OK, attacked by flak when over the mainland – nothing much. at the target area everything was in a shambles. Searchlights, light & heavy flak, machine guns. Some of the lads were attacking the shipping – a diversionary – poor blighters were taking it in turns to run over the target area – railway repair sheds – could see the lads being caught in S/L's when pulling out of their dives – not very pleasant to watch, especially when you know your turn is to come. Hit a few times, nothing really serious – none of the crew wounded. And so ended my last op. Very exciting. Tried to continue but no joy.

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<sup>3</sup> W/O. Hendy was the pilot on this flight, but is not listed in the diary.