

February 1945 Form 540

203 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
			I. Operations
Madura			The flying during February has been entirely confined to Exercises, and Training and Transit Flights of various kinds, the Squadron's area of operations being considered free from U-Boats, both German and Japanese, as is the whole of the Indian Ocean area at the present time. In view of this situation it has been decided that in future operations the Squadron will be employed primarily on anti-shipping strikes in the Bay of Bengal. AS a first step in this new role, the Squadron has been moved from Madura to Kankasanturai, thereby being more favourably situated for long rang operations against the Nicobars and Northern Sumatra, and having the advantage of a 2,500 yds runway for maximum load take-offs as soon as the extension at present nearing completion, becomes serviceable.
			Orders for the movement were received on February 16th, instructions being for the Squadron to convey all personnel and as much equipment as possible by air in its own aircraft, the movement to be completed by the end of the month. arrangements for this worked very smoothly. The trip in each direction could be flown in a little under 1 hour and all aircraft employed maintained satisfactorily high degree of serviceability. By the end of the month the move was complete with the exception of a small rear party, comprising chiefly M.T. personnel, which remained to accompany the heaviest items of equipment by rail. In all, 119 flights were made between Madura and Kankasanturai in carrying out this move, all without incident, despite occasionally unfavourable weather.
			Training, during the month has included Navigation Exercises, day and night anti-submarine exercises, the dropping of supplies to troops exercising in Ceylon, low level bombing and Radar exercises and Photograph.
			Two more crews (P/O. Law & W/O. Lyons) including ground personnel have been detached to No. 21 Armament Practice Camp Cholavarum.
			Non-operational and Training Flights totalled
			310 hours day 50 hours night.
			Technical.
			Again an exceptionally high serviceability of 10 ½ was maintained with an aircraft strength of 12. In spite of the large number of heavy load landings entailed in moving the Squadron, no troubles of any kind were experienced on this account.
			The only serious failure experienced was due to the disintegration of No. 3 Fuel Tank in Liberator EV866. Rubber got through the filters and into the carburettor, necessitating engine and fuel tank changes.
Madura	Feb. 1		F/O. McKay flew Navigation Exercise No. 3 with turning points at Minnicoy Island and Kelai.
			W/O. Hudson flew to Santa Cruz to collect spares.
			Low level bombing was carried out on the local range.
	Feb. 2		W/O. Lyons and F/L. Taylor carried out exercises in the Gulf of Mannar.
	Feb. 6		F/L. Waterton and P/O. Roigard were detached for three days to Kankasanturai to drop supplies to troops exercising in the Minneriya area. The supplies were dropped successfully by night in hilly and thickly wooded country, the dropping area being indicated by a row of lights. An Army officer flew in the aircraft to advise.
			S/Ldr. Mosher flew Navigation Exercise No. 4 with turning points at Minicoy and Male, and returned with some good photographs of the Islands.

	Feb. 13		P/O. Law and W/O. Lyons were detached to No. 21 A.P.C. Cholavarum.
Kankesanturai	Feb. 14		F/L. Sandall and P/O. Roigard flew to Kankesanturai to carry out day and night anti-submarine exercises. P/O. Roigard carried out the day exercise only (UBX5) landing at K.K.S. Three good dummy attacks were made, and S.E. homing was satisfactory. F/L. Sandall carried out day and night attacks, returning direct to Madura at completion of exercise. UBX5 was completed satisfactorily, and one good night attack was made, although the light series Flare carrier was unserviceable and flares had to be released manually through the flare chute. Two further night homings were carried out, but in each case on releasing the flares the target proved to be a merchant ship. The amount of shipping in the area towards the end of the exercise period rendered accurate homing almost impossible, although the submarine indicated its position by flashing a light on one occasion.
Kankesanturai	Feb. 17		P/O. Roigard remained at Kankesanturai, and was joined by F/L. Fletcher for further supply dropping in the Minneriya area. Again the supplies were dropped by night at three positions indicated by lights. One previous flight was made over the area by day to familiarise the crews.
	Feb. 19		Instructions having been received that the Squadron was to be moved by air to Kankesanturai by the end of the month, the first three ferry flights were flown by S/Ldr. Gane, F/L. Waterton and F/L. Russell, F/L. Waterton remaining at K.K.S. in charge of the advance party. Thereafter ferrying continued daily.
	Feb. 22		F/L. Aldcroft carried out UBX5 (day exercise with submarine) in the Colombo Sanctuary. Once again the shipping in the area interfered to some extent with the S.E. homing, but in other respects the exercise was successful.
	Feb. 24		In spite of heavy rainstorms ferrying continued with 8 aircraft.
	Feb. 25		8 aircraft ferrying personnel and freight, 4 remaining at K.K.S., including the Flight Commander S/Ldr. V. B. R. Gane.
	Feb. 26		8 aircraft ferrying.
	Feb. 27		F/Lt. Fletcher flew over the supply dropping area at Minneriya for familiarisation.
			Ferrying continued with 6 aircraft.
			W/Cdr. L. Fox moved to K.K.S.
	Feb. 28		F/Lt. Fletcher dropped supplies by night at 5 positions to the troops exercising at Minneriya. All drops were successful from 500 to 700 feet, although the indicator lights had been laid across or down wind at four of the positions, and in one case the dropping run was laid into the hills.
			Again 7 aircraft carried out ferry flights.
			II. Administration
			Welfare
			A full programme of sports was continued, including football, hockey and cricket. Indoor entertainments included whist-drives and tombola, table tennis and the like.
			Before leaving Madura a last Squadron dance was held at the Railway Institute, to which all local residents were invited.
			Health.
			There has been little serious illness. The total reporting sick (inclusive of new arrivals) was 283, averaging 10 daily, and there were 75 cases of illness treated during the month.
			III. Personnel.
	Feb. 21		Arrival. 1153776 F/O. L.M.J. Grant (Pilot) from U.K.
			1815386 Sgt. Senham, P.O. (A.P.)
	Feb. 10		J.9275 F/Lt. G. L. Fletcher (Pilot) and complete crew from U.K.
			including A.417407 F/O. A. L. Paltridge (Nav)
			A.437600 P/O. A. Nener (WOM)

	Feb. 10		1805082 P/O. R. C. Shepherd (WOM/AIR) posted from 200 Squadron.
			R.171819 W/O. J. Defir (WOP/AIR) "
			A.425704 W/O. R. Lyons " "
			1575603 F/S. W. E. Harper (WOM/AIR) "
			578023 Sgt. E. Wilkinson " "
	Feb. 9		Departure. 55052 F/O. G. A. Catling. (Pilot) to Nassau.
			IV. General
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