

May 1945: Form 540

358 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
R.A.F. Jessore	May 1945		
	1		Operation Order No. 60.
			Aircraft Liberator VI. KH312 on returning from operations was ditched at Apprpx. 0029 hours at Map Reference 1838°N 9330°E. Captain signalled position and also that he only had 2 engines when off Cheroba? Island. Light – Moon. Message received at approx. 11—hrs that a Catalina aircraft had putdown in the sea by a dinghy with five survivors. As yet no further news of the missing four. Crew consisted of 9 personnel as follows:
			Capt. F/Lt. R. W. Robinson (51159) 2nd. P. F/O. R. A. Carter (Aus.29296) Nav./B. F/O. W. H. Bull (165575) B/A. Sgt. A. J. Sherwood. (1583263) 1.WOP. F/O. L. C. Bartlett (165606) 2.WOP Sgt. E. M? A. Andrews (1357596) A/G. Sgt. T. F. Clarke (636459) A/G. Sgt. A. Burling. (1877098) A/G. F/Sgt. R. Bell (15?95905)
			Later information said a further two survivors picked up. No name yet given.
	2		Operation Order No. 61.
	3		Operation Order No. 62.
	5		I. Operations: Information received from H.Qs, 346 Wing Akyab that F/Sgt. Bell and Sgts. Andrews and Sherwood were at 125 General Hospital but no information as to their condition. H.Qs. 902 Wing, Ramree, notified us that after a successful drop No. 1 engine failed with No. 4 running 'rough', subsequently failing too. Crew were ordered to ditching stations off Cheduba? Island owing to rapid loss of height. Aircraft hit waste with savage impact, nose smashed in and Aircraft broke up rapidly. Survivors swam ashore and were later picked up by a Catalina and A.S.R. launch, 902 Wing any further survivors extremely unlikely.
			H.Qs., 905? Wing signalled for particulars of F/O. Carter who was apparently admitted to 95 I.G.H. on 1st May 1945, suffering from Multiple injuries.
			From these 'miscellaneous' signals it is deduced that F/L. Robinson, F/O. Bull, F/O. Bartlett, Sgt. Clarke and Sgt. Burling are either killed or missing with F/O. Carter, F/Sgt. Bell and Sgts Sherwood and Andrews in hospital.
	6		Operation Order No. 63.
			Confirmation received from Advanced H.Qs. 902 Wing that Sgt. A. Burling had been killed in the ditching of KH312 on 1st May and had been buried at Ch?duba, also that F/O. Carter had died in No. 95 I.G.H. at 0350 hrs on May 2nd and was interred in the Military Cemetery, Akyab, on May 2nd. H. Q. 203 Wing notify F/O. Bartlett Safe and condition comfortable at 95 I.G.H., Akyab
	7		Sgt. Andrews, F/Sgt. Bell arrived on the Squadron. Position now: Safe – Sgts. Andrews, Sgt. Sherwood (injured) F/Sgt. Bell, F/O. Bartlett (injured) – Died: F/O. Carter and Sgt. Burling Missing: Believed killed: F/L. Robinson, F/O. Bull and Sgt. Clarke.
	8		Operation Order No. 64.
	9		Operation Order No. 65.
	12		Operation Order No. 66.

	15		Operation Order No. 67.
	18		Operation Order No. 68.
	20		Operation Order No. 69.
	22		Operation Order No. 70.
	24		Operation Order No. 71.
	23 ¹		Operation Order No. 72.
	25		Liberator VI EW108, just allotted as replacement from 136 R.S.U. on 25.5.45, was taken up on Air Test and Acceptance Check at 1133 hrs I.S.T. by F/Sgt E. V. Matthews (Pilot) and crew of 5. At about 1200 hours the aircraft was seen to dive steeply whilst circling the airfield and was found crashed in flames 7 miles N.W. Jessore town in a native village "Tank" at Jhuadia, Jessore (Map ref. 2314 ½ N 8908 ½ E). All the crew were killed. The bodies of F/Sgt. E. V. Matthews, Sgt. Wallace, W., and W/O. S. J. Webb were recovered and identified, and taken to the Mortuary of the Civil Hospital, Jessore. The bodies of the other 3 crew members are suspected of being trapped under the wreckage in the mud at the bottom of the tank, as an extensive search of the surrounding area was fruitless. The aircraft was a total wreck – Category E.O. (Burnt).
			Personnel Killed:
			1604351 T/F/Sgt. Matthews, E. V. Pilot
			1890474 T/F/Sgt. Wells, K. R. F/Eng.
			1820830 T/Sgt. McDonald, W. W. F/Eng.
			1307031 T/W/O. S. J. Webb, WOP/A.
			1568323 T/Sgt. Wallace, W. A/G.
			1567533 T/Sgt. Whitehouse, G. S. A/G.
	26		Operation Order No. 73.
	28		Operation Order No. 74.
			Ditching of Liberator KH312 'X' on 1st May 1945. A report was today received, from 7th Emergency Rescue Squadron (U.S.A.A.F) concerning the rescue of the survivors of this aircraft. I think the crew of Catalina 982 put up a fine show in picking up the survivors in face of most difficult and hazardous conditions. The action of Lt. S. N?ubbs and Puchalski in successfully landing and taking off the Catalina with almost full load in a very heavy sea is highly commendable. Report confirms burial of Sgt. Burling by two American Officers of No. 7 E.R.S, at co-ordinates 1849N 9330 ½ E.
	29		Liberator SD/VI 'P' EW174 airborne at 0004 hours today, overdue. No news from aircraft.
			Crew:
			J.27671 F/O. H. V. Smith. GD(P) (Capt)
			1434100 F/Sgt. Pool, B. R. 2nd Pilot.
			1390398 F/Sgt. Brenchley, P. R. D. Nav/B.
			1802379 F/Sgt. Draper, J. H. A/Bmr.
			1398294 Sgt. Woods, R. S. WOP/A.
			2206912 F/Sgt. Pugh, W. A. 2nd WOP/A
			1805139 Sgt. Pinckney, W. J. A/G.
			993351 F/Sgt. Copley, C. A/G.
			1126922 Sgt. Parsons, F. J. A/G.
			1592155 F/Sgt. Roe, J. R. A/G.
	30		Operation Order No. 74.
			3 Squadron Liberators VI A/C. 'Q', 'F', and 'N', despatched from Base to conduct a sea search of an area the Bay of Bengal south of the Sunderbans. Aircraft was off and returned to base. The search was extensive but proved

¹ Record says '23'.

			fruitless as no trace of the crew was found.
	31		Operations; A report was received today from H.Q. 231 Group on an investigation which had been made in Burma into the crashes of Liberator KH215 (F/Lt. K. H. Brailsford) and KH277 (S/Ldr. A. S. M. Pim) on the 22nd January 1945.
			It was definitely established that KH215 had crashed at Tiskn and that the bodies of the Eight members of the crew had been buried by local villagers. Arrangements have been made with No. 32 Graves Registration Unit for them to be dismembered and re-buried in a Military Cemetery.
			KH277 crashed near Mimzawl? and five bodies were recovered and identified and have been buried in Tiddim? Military Cemetery.
			The five bodies were: S/Ldr. A. S. M. Pim., F/Sgt. E. C. Hearn, Sgt. S. E. Saldier, F/O. E. Clarke and F/O. W. J. Wallace which were identified by articles and identity discs found on the bodies. No trace of the remaining members, F/Sgt. J. H. Holt, Sgt. G. Gittins, and Sgt. J. A. Robinson, could be found.
			Operational Summary – May 1945.
			The start of the monsoon season within the operational area of 358 Squadron caused a considerable drop in the percentage of completed sorties in comparison to the results for April. In fact, among the several causes for uncompleted missions, the weather accounted for 24.48 per cent failures of the total of 98 sorties mounted. Total hours flown by Squadron during the month were: Total Operational hours – 1017.55 hours. Total non-operational 195.30 hours. Grand total of 1213.25 hours.
			Of the 98 sorties started, 56 were completed in that loads were dropped over D.Z.s and the 42 definitely unsuccessful were attributed to the following reasons: - Weather 24; No reception at D.Z. 6; Wrong reception at D.Z. 2; Engine failure 7; Compass failure 1; Fuelling delayed at Chittagong 1; Enemy action (shot down by fighter A/C. 1.
			Although operations over Northern French Indo China were considerably less than in previous months, the variety of commitments and targets was about as usual. Certain areas in the Malay States were visited and the longest trip of the month was in this direction; F/O. H. V. Smith, a young Canadian, logged 22 hours 59 minutes of uninterrupted flying including a successful drop in the middle of it.
			For the first time since the squadron had been in operation enemy aircraft were encountered during this month. An hour before reaching their target in Malaya, the crew of Liberator 'T' F/Sgt. Matthews, Captain, sighted three "Rufe" float planes at position 0420 North 100.25 East at 1605 hours flying North toward Penang 500 ft. above our aircraft which was at 1,800 feet. When they approached in line astern to attack, F/Sgt. Matthews turned steeply toward the leader, the mid-upper fired a burst of 50 rounds and the e/a immediately turned away and were not seen again. No strikes were observed on the e/a. When approaching the D.Z. at 1658 hrs, the crew sighted a Thalma transport flying North West at 200 ft. above T. The Mid-upper gunner fired a short burst in passing and reported "seeing something fly off it". This e/a did not alter course and flew on out of sight. Thirteen minutes after leaving his D.Z. F/Sgt. Matthews saw another Rufe 1,000 ft. below him on a reciprocal course. It turned and followed our A/C which then entered cloud. This Rufe was soon lost and was not seen again.
			The next encounter occurred at 0930 hours on the 23rd when the same captain and crew in A/C.. 'F' while in an area approx, 100 miles North East of Rangoon and near the Salween River, sighted eight Oscars as our A/C was on its D.R. run to the D.Z. These e/a were lost sight of as they turned to fly

		round a cloud at 11 O'clock from the Liberator. Shortly afterwards 5 e/s approached from the port and 3 e/a from the starboard, formatting into a stepped-up line astern as they did so. Liberator 'F' escaped the close attentions of these e/a by diving into the cover of 9/10ths cumulus and they were not seen again. The crew were of the opinion that these e/a were en route for Chiengmai. The Captain, although confident that he could have got below the 9/10ths cumulus over the D.Z area, did not do so in view of the danger of compromising the D.Z.
		Actual encounter with the enemy came five days later.
		F/O. H. V. Smith, R.C.A.F., from Winnipeg, captain of aircraft 'P' (EW174) was on an operation over Siam on the 29th when he was intercepted by nine Oscars, who, in a concentrated attack, killed the second pilot, F/Sgt. Pool, navigator, F/Sgt. Brenchley and top turret gunner St. Pinckney, and all four engines were shot to a standstill. Fire was returned and the crew claim one Oscar probably destroyed.
		F/O. Smith fought the aircraft down to a crash landing in the Siamese jungle with such skill that six of the crew and three of the four passengers emerged alive, F/Sgt. Draper, bomb aimer and Cpl Napierdlaki of the U.S. Army one of the four passengers who were to have been dropped at the D.Z., were killed in the landing. The five dead were buried near the wrecked aircraft.
		Of the survivors, F/O. Smith, injured in the head, back and right ankle and F/Sgt. Copley (Gunner) who sustained cuts and sprained back, together with the three passengers, succeeded in walking out of the country and returned to base. But the rest of the crew: F/Sgt. Pugh and Sgt. Wood (W/Ops); F/Sgt. Parsons and F/Sgt. Roe (gunners) were of necessity interned by the Siamese authorities to cover the escape of the others.
		III – Personnel.
	15	Quite an important day for the Squadron. Four new crews arrived – the first for over two months: from Poona ex No.5 O.T.U. Canada. Amongst these crews were the following officers: 128470 F/Lt. M. E. Castle, GD(P). 165721 F/O. H. E. Cooke GD(Nav) 165931 F/O. J. M. McBeath, GD(Nav) 166278 F/O. S. A. Cosall, GD(G.S) 166167 F/O. R. G. Kensett, GD(A/B) 165753 F/O. J. Smith, GD(Nav) 166159 F/O. D. L. Petherbridge, GD(A/B) 165769 F/O. C. S. Trill GD(A/B) 166160 P/O. J. E. Zde, GD(A/B)
	26	1251755 L.A.C. Hoskins G. B. (F.2.A) and 984985 L.A.C. Lewis, A. (F.2.A) injured in M.T. accident opposite Jessore College, Jessore Town. Hoskins and Lewis were passengers in a 3 ton truck going up to the airfield at 06.45 hours, which collided with a 3 ton truck of No. 357 Squadron going in the opposite direction. Hoskins was seriously injured, Lewis slightly and both were admitted to No. 21 B.G.H., Calcutta, today.
		The funeral of W/O. Webb, F/Sgt. Matthews, F/Sgt. Wells, took place at 16.30 hours today at the European Cemetery, Jessore (Map Ref. 2311 N 8911 E) with full service honours. The Service was conducted by S/L. A Slack (O.D) Chaplain with Full Service honours. The three remaining of Sgt. McDonald, Wallace and Whitehouse bodies were recovered from the wreckage too late for burial today and will be interned tomorrow.
	27	The funeral of Sgt. McDonald, Sgt. Wallace and Sgt. Whitehouse took place at 16.30 hours today at the European Cemetery, Jessore. The ceremony was conducted by S/L. A. Slack, (G.D) Chaplain with full service honours.
		A further four aircrews were collected from Poona in 2 Liberators. These crews are urgently required to replace Ops. tour expired crews. Amongst this influx were the following Officers: 152137 F/O. A. R. Outran? GD(P). 166162 F/O. W. C. Taylor, GD(A/B)

			130218 F/Lt. E. Manning, GD(P) 166030 F/). C. P. Carner-Richards GD(N?)							
			166166 F/O. W. C. Lewington, GD(A/B) 166790 F/O. J. J. Armstrong GD(A/B)							
			166005 F/O. W. N. Cook GD(G) 166187 F/O. J. M. Wilson GD(P)							
			166021 F/O. K. W. L. Gibbs, GD(Nav) 152553 F/O. R. L. Husband. GD(Nav)							
			166158 F/O. T. A. Barnett, GD(A/B) 166737 P/O. R. M. Redfern GD(Nav)							
			165993 F/O. S. Grayton GD(Nav)							
	30		One crew arrived by Rail from Poona, ex 5 O.T.U., Canada. All S.N.C.Os.							
	31		The posted strength of the Squadron at the end of the month was:-							
				Officers	Aircrew NCOs	Ground SNCOs	BORs	IORs	EF/s	Total
				69	198	44	466	20	69	866
			Effective Stg.	55	151	38	395	15	60	714
			V. – General							
	8	1930 hrs.	Prime Minister announced the defeat of Germany. The news was received very soberly and there was no demonstrations of violent enthusiasm. This was to be expected as "VE" day announcement had been awaited for several days.							
	9	0950	As many as possible utilised the restricted radio facilities to listen the H.M. the King's Speech which came through splendidly. Everyone enthusiastically drank his Good health and "external damnation to the Nazis". Operations as usual on this date!!!							
	10		General "Stand down" for the day in celebration of the European Peace. This was spent very quietly as supplies of liquor were non existent although a few small parties developed.							
	13		As part of the celebration of the European Peace a Station Church Parade was conducted in the No. 136 R.S.U. hanger. The Squadron personnel were under the orders of F/Lt. H. H. Monks.							
	14		General Station Celebration Day. This squadron was called upon to furnish a compliment of 30 men to take part in a Station Parade through the town of Jessore. The Commanding Officer directed that the squadron would be most effectively represented by aircrew. Assembling at the Guardroom, the detachment marched and joined the Bengal Police Contingent. The R.A.F. party was led by S/Ldr. Chance of S.H.Q. and the salute was taken by the Mayor of Jessore accompanied by Group Captain Wightman, DFC, AFC, (the Station Commander), and Magistrates and town officials of Jessore. The Squadron acquitted itself well in the March past which was to the accompaniment of the pipes of the Police Pipe Band.							
	16		This day was selected for the Squadron's own "VE" day celebrations. The May beer issue had arrived and a general "Stand-down" was ordered. The final of the Squadron Football competition was played off in the afternoon. The teams were "B" Flight Ground crew vs. Aircrew and "B" Flight Ground Crew won by 2 goals to 2. Wing Commander P. G. D. Farr (D.F.C.) Officer Commanding presented a Silver Cup to the winners. In the evening a special dinner was laid on consisting of Hors d'oevres, Tomato Soup. Roast Port, stuffing, apple sauce and vegetables. Preserved fruit and ice cream, cheese and biscuits, nuts, sweets, cordials and cigarettes followed by a smoking and beer concert. The officers of the Squadron served the meal. Everyone spent a most enjoyable evening. Much of the credit for the provision of the excellent diner must go to F/Lt. N. W. Pemberton (Squadron Messing Officer) who went to much trouble organising and buying supplies in Calcutta and locally. The cooks, also got their fingers 'Out' and served up the meal most appetisingly.							
	17		E.N.S.A. Concert Party arrived at Jessore for three performances on 17th, 18th & 19th. Performance on 18th for 358 Squadron personnel only. The performance was presented by The O'German Brothers (EX London Pavilion)							

			with a mixed cast, in which the "Girls", as usual were uproariously welcomed.
	22		Parliamentary Elections in U.K. Forms 2761 and 2762 arrived for personnel who wish to vote by post in the next General Elections in U.K. The scheme to vote by post does not seem to be very popular, and very few applications were put in.
			F540 from Engineer Officer, Signals Officer, Navigation Officer, Bombing Leader, Armament Officer, Medical Officer & O.C. 'A' Flight.
			See Appendices Nos 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23.
			E. C. Badcok
			Wing Commander, Commanding
			No. 358 Squadron, R.A.F.