

## DIARY OF 1841 SQUADRON

From 1 Mar 44 to 23 Jul 45

Typed by Charles V. Rolfe

*This diary was maintained by S/Lt Alan Maitland, a Pilot of 1841 Squadron (ordered to do so by LCDR(A) Richard Bigg-Wither, the Commanding Officer of 1841) and continued until he was shot down and lost over Japan.*

March 1st 1841 Squadron formed up today at USNAS BRUNSWICK, Maine under the Command of Lt. Commander(A) R.L. Bigg-Wither R.N. Lt(A) R.E. Dubber R.N. is First Lieutenant and Sub Lt(A) H.S. Mattholie R.N.V.R. the Adjutant. No Pilots have been approved for the Squadron.

March 2nd Still no Pilots appointed. Two Corsair I aircraft were flown in.

March 3rd The following Pilots were appointed to the Squadron:-

\* See  
March 6th

S/Lt(A) A.B. Brown	R.N.V.R.	} -	Flight Maintenance Officers
S/Lt(A) M.J. Connolly	R.N.V.R.*		
S/Lt(A) E.H. Humphries	R.N.V.R.	} -	Armament
S/Lt(A) W.A.M. Ferguson	R.N.V.R.		
S/Lt(A) E.D. Hewetson	R.N.Z.N.V.R.	-	*Assistant Armament
S/Lt(A) J. Bastion	R.N.Z.N.V.R.	-	Parachute & Safety Appliances
S/Lt(A) D. Morten	R.N.Z.N.V.R.	-	C.B.'s and Publications
S/Lt(A) D.H.P. McLisky	R.N.Z.N.V.R.	-	Sports
S/Lt(A) R.H. Glading	R.N.Z.N.V.R.	-	Radio & Electrical
S/Lt(A) C.G. Hartshorn	R.N.Z.N.V.R.	-	Transport
S/Lt(A) J.W. Blaikie	R.N.V.R.	-	Stores
S/Lt(A) J.R. Crosland	R.N.V.R.	-	Assistant Stores
S/Lt(A) J.F. Crosskill	R.N.V.R.	-	Hangar & Fire
S/Lt(A) L.A. Maitland	R.N.V.R.	-	Diary & Progress Chart
S/Lt(A) L.M. Reeve	R.N.V.R.	-	

The Stores Officer and his Assistant went quickly to work and procured divers useful articles for the Pilot's Ready Room on the North side of Hangar 2. Most important of these was a goodly collection of chairs. Pilots are now assured of many comfortable Ready Room hours to come. A Jeep, a truck and a further Corsair I were turned over to the Squadron

Lt Dubber had a familiarisation flight for an hour in 5 Able, a 732 Squadron plane.

Weather: v. cold & windy. Duty Runways: 34, 21, 27.

March 4th The C.O. spoke to all Pilots this morning. He particularly stressed their responsibilities as Officers of a Squadron, explaining that it's efficiency depended upon them to a great extent. He mentioned that eight Pilots from 732 Squadron would be attached to this Squadron throughout the working-up period & that all 26 Pilots would do their deck landings at the same time. He cautioned all Pilots to keep the inevitable finger out & avoid prangs.

In future Pilots will be in the Ready Room by 0800 hours. This should ease the congestion that develops in the Officers Mess about 0755 on most mornings. The Squadron enjoyed a Make and Mend in the afternoon.

Weather: cold & windy. Duty Runway: 34

March 5th Two more Corsair I aircraft were added to the six already in the Squadron's possession. Considerable difficulty was experienced & an enormous number of cartridges expended in an attempt to start up 7 Jig. Finally, due to the extraordinary

technical knowledge of Sub Lieutenants Ferguson and Humphries, 7 Jig was started successfully at the expense of a further three cartridges. This brilliant performance was watched critically from the windows of the Pilot's Ready Room by an enthusiastic crowd of spectators.

Today the Squadron suffered it's first casualty. Corsair II aircraft 7 Roger neatly retracted it's tailwheel while being pushed out of the Hangar. A notice is now in the Pilot's Ready Room to the effect that it's a good thing to have the landing gear control in the 'up' position while the plane is on the ground. Lt Dubber and S/Lt Mattholie had a local flight together. They were in the air for an hour during which they practiced formation, attacks and aerobatics. They used two planes from 732 Squadron.

Weather: windy & cold. Duty runway: 34.

March 6th

Yesterday the Squadron was divided into three Flights and today these were altered slightly in order that each Flight should have it's own Maintenance Officer. At the same time S/Lt's Hewetson and Connolly changed duties, \*Hewetson becoming Maintenance Officer for Yellow Flight & \*Connolly Assistant Armament Officer. The Flights are now as follows:

\* See  
March 3rd

RED	BLUE	YELLOW
LCDR Bigg-Wither	S/Lt Mattholie	Lt Dubber
S/Lt Maitland	S/Lt Humphries	S/Lt Morten
S/Lt Ferguson	S/Lt Connolly	S/Lt Hewetson
S/Lt Crosskill	S/Lt Crosland	S/Lt Bastion
S/Lt Brown	S/Lt Reeve	S/Lt Glading
S/Lt Hartshorn	S/Lt Blaikie	S/Lt McLisky

Pilots of the Squadron put in their first hours of flying in the Squadron planes - almost without mishap. 7 Jig was again obstinate in starting. After she'd been warmed up, S/Lt Mattholie taxied out confidently to Runway 34. Five minutes later he was seen returning, not under his own steam. While testing the fuel selector valve before take-off, he had turned it to one of the wing tanks & the engine stopped. Ten minutes later he was airborne. Lt Dubber flew for an hour also. Both these Officers examined the landscape in Area Joseph from a low altitude. S/Lt Reeve flew 7 Sugar on a familiarisation flight.

After lunch, S/Lt's Mattholie, Humphries and Reeve had 45 minutes formation flying & later Lt Dubber & S/Lt Hewetson flew together. The latter wrote off on landing light & damaged his flaps during his landing run. 7 Sugar was the victim. Yellow Flight in the morning, and Red Flight in the afternoon, tussled valiantly with the Link and strove gallantly to orbit and buster at the same time. In spite of Lt Warrick's enthusiasm, Roger and Wilco still seem to be two rather trying fellows to get to know. Three more Corsair I's came in.

Weather: warmer less wind. Duty Runway: 34. Hours flown: 6 hrs 45 mins.

March 7th

Six inches of snow on the ground this morning. About 1000 the snow turned to sleet and then to rain which continued the rest of the working day. Pilots censured mail or watched the Armourers servicing the guns on the aircraft in the Hangar. Red and Blue Flights were secured around 1430; Yellow Flight were enjoying the Link trainer. Weather: horrible! Duty Runway: ? Hours Flown: Sweet F.A.

March 8th

1841 Squadron flew comparatively hard today, ten hours forty minutes in all! And no prangs. S/Lt's Blaikie and Bastion spent an hour slow flying, gliding and aerobatics. Lt Dubber flew for an hour locally. On returning to the field Lt Dubber requested permission for himself & these two Pilots to make gliding approaches. The Tower however, would have none of this: "After all", they are reported to have said, "this is an Operation Base"! So we did not have the pleasure of seeing three Corsair approaching Runway 27 in a 45° dive.

In the afternoon S/Lt's Morten, Crosland, Brown and McLisky tried their hands at gliding, slow flying and aerobatics for an hour. Later, S/Lt's Mattholie, Ferguson, Maitland and Crosskill flew patrol formation for an hour. The rendezvous after take-

off for this flight could be described as distinctly ropey. One section was seen to be joined up in the first 90° of turn after take-off & to be circling at about 2000'. The other section decided to orbit at approximately 5000'. Eventually, to the relief of all concerned, the two sections got together. Even then the flight wasn't exactly a success.

Due to the enthusiasm & what-not of the Sports Officer, S/Lt McLisky R.N.Z.N.V.R about 15 Officers were persuaded to go swimming in the pool of Bowdoin College this evening. Water polo of sorts was played but a large rubber raft was the chief source of amusement and a good time was had by all.

The twelfth Corsair arrived for the Squadron.  
Weather: Colder but fair. Duty Runway: 27, 21. Hours flown: 10.40 hrs.

March 9th We beat 732 Squadron this morning and one at least of our aircraft was in the air first! Today also, the Squadron was introduced to a very interesting person. He was Mr. Charles Sharp, Test Pilot for Chance Vought. Here before us was a man who had put our little Corsair into a four turn spin and brought her out. And no sign of twitch! This cheered many of us up considerably. Mr. Sharp described the characteristics of both left and right spins and the recovery from them. "When controls have been reversed, the spin speeds up - but don't be alarmed" he added cheerfully, "That's a good sign". Stick and rudder forces are approximately 100 and 125 lbs respectively. Mr. Sharp also spoke about water injection and gave some interesting details about modifications to the newest Corsairs - raised tailwheels, modified rudder pedals and seat positions, clear cockpit hoods and the like. He mentioned high speed diving tests being carried out by other Test Pilots and investigations into wing shudder and buffet at high speeds. A thousand pound bomb had also been fitted to the Corsair but no displacing gear was necessary because in a dive the released bomb went backwards in relation to the aircraft. S/Lt Connolly, a practical man, wanted to know what happened to the aircraft next in line. Charlie Sharp is 21 and has been with Chance Vought since he was 18 or 19.

In the morning S/Lt Mattholie took S/Lt's Crosland, Blaikie and Connolly on an hour's patrol formation. S/Lt's Reeve, Humphries, Maitland and Ferguson did stalls, gliding and aerobatics for 45 minutes. The C.O. led Brown and Hartshorn for an hours formation. S/Lt McLisky was first to fly in the afternoon. He was followed by Hewetson and Glading. All three tried their hand at aerobatics. S/Lt Connolly did the same thing later. Lt Dubber with S/Lt's Morten and Bastion flying wing landed at Portland after being lost and returned after an hour and 45 minutes. 732 Squadron making some delightfully ropey landings on Runway 27.  
Weather: cold and fine. Runway: 27. Hours flown: 20 hours 5 minutes.

Black!!!  
March 10th Not a very notable day. 7 Sugar suffered yet again. Flaps perforated neatly. It seems that Pilots are out for the blood of this wretched aircraft - for obvious reasons to anyone who has attempted to fly it!

Twenty hours and twenty five minutes of classy flying were amassed today. This included patrol formations, slow flying, aerobatics, gliding and low flying in Area Joseph.

A Chance Vought technician (Harry Burney) was in the Hangar during the afternoon advising the P.O.'s on the maintenance of the Corsair. He was particularly keen on the brakes. We are all glad of this.

Weather: cold & dull. Duty Runway: 27. Hrs flown: 20.25

March 11th A large amount of low flying was carried out today from which all our precious aircraft returned safely. Formation, aerobatic and other exercises were also flown. Blue Flight were secured in the afternoon. Red and Yellow flew.

P.O. Wright seems to understand all about the Corsair's brakes. At least 7 Baker's Starboard brake is no longer U/S. P.O. Pringle as well now has the clue on brakes.

Weather: fine & cold. Duty Runway: 21, 3. Hours flown: 21.05.

March 12th Great disappointment today amongst Pilots of the Squadron. We had high hopes

of putting up a record for total flying hours but the weather was poor & we suddenly discovered that only two aircraft were serviceable. S/Lt's Mattholie and Blaikie were the only members to fly. During their time in the air we caught occasional glimpses of them through the mist and murk. They seemed to keep close to the field; under these conditions it was the wisest thing to do. Blaikie gambolled playfully down the runway on landing; his windscreen covered in oil. The Tower wouldn't allow aircraft without radios to fly so the Squadron was secured in the afternoon. We can hardly say that we've flown more than 732 today; they're on weekend leave! Weather: overcast, misty, mild. Duty Runway: 21. Hours flown: 1 hour 50 minutes.

March 13th

Rain stopped all play today. In the forenoon Pilots had a lively time censoring mail. After lunch Lt Dubber told us a little about R.A.F. tactics: Ramrods, Circuses Rhubarbs, Range and so on. From 1500 to 1600 Pilots - at least the really keen ones - took a little exercise in the gym. Weather: rain, rain, rain.

March 14th

S/Lt McLisky may have missed his breakfast this morning; at least he admits feeling unwell. While taxiing out for take-off, he ran into trouble. The trouble in this case being an Avenger's propeller which chopped swiftly through his tailplane and the extreme end of his fuselage. 7 Baker's brake had been troublesome all the way from the Hangar and the accident occurred when the aircraft ground looped near American aeroplanes parked by the taxi-way. The Pilot of the Avenger immediately climbed out and introduced himself to S/Lt McLisky. The two Pilots then shook hands cordially. Apart from the damage to 7 Baker therefore, this is a story with a happy ending. We must congratulate S/Lt McLisky on his successful if costly method of furthering Anglo-American relations! Later in the day, 7 Baker was seen being towed dejectedly to the Engineering Hangar.

It was definitely a New Zealander's day. S/Lt Bastion R.N.Z.N.V.R. was flying along peacefully, when there was a sudden and terrific clatter! Thinking that the aircraft had decided to give up the ghost, he began looking around. The first thing that caught his eye was a sort of gap where the Starboard section of his engine cowling should have been. He returned safely to the field. Later he flew again but was forced to come back early because of fumes in the cockpit.

A good deal of formation and low flying was done by the Squadron. Weather: fine & mild. Duty Runway: Hrs flown: 22.25.

March 15th

Today for the first time, we succeeded in passing the daily average of 25 flying hours set for the Squadron during the working-up period.

S/Lt Bastion supplies the headlines again. Late in the afternoon his aircraft swerved off the runway and nosed over in the soft ground alongside. It seems that the only damage to 7 Mike is a bent propeller. S/Lt Bastion is still undamaged. 7 Oboe persists in filling it's cockpit with whitish fumes while in flight. S/LT's Maitland and Crosland were forced to endure these deadly vapours during short flights in this aircraft.

Weather: overcast and chilly. Duty Runway: 3, 34, 27, 21. Hours flown: 28.55.

March 16th

Winter returns again to Brunswick. Six (correction: 3") inches of snow welcomed us this morning. Naturally no flying. All Pilots attended a lecture on weather in the Synthetic Building and an accompanying film. Blue and Red Flights were secured after lunch.

Weather: overcast, damp, miserable.

March 17th

No one likes rain very much particularly those who are eager to go aloft and into the "Wide Blue Yonder". However today we had to endure a whole day of it. The view from the Pilot's Ready Room of Runways 21 and 27 and a miserable expanse of slush, water and snow is beginning to have a depressing affect on us. Red Flight spent the morning in the Synthetic Building watching films and attempting to dodge Ens: DerBose while in the afternoon they and Yellow Flight were secured.

These rather cheerful lines were discovered by Sub Lt Crysler of 732 Sqdn today

Twitch!!!

CHAUCER - On S/Lt's of the Fleet Air Arm?

Once, there was a company  
 Of young companions, givers to folly,  
 Riot and gambling, brothel and tavern,  
 And, to the music of harps, lutes, gitterns;  
 They danced and played at dice both day and night  
 And ate also and drank beyond their might,  
 By superfluity both wind and rain  
 So damnably their oaths and so profane  
 That it was terrible to hear them swear.

(The Pardoner's Tale.)

March 18th

To make up for yesterday the Squadron put in 32 hours 10 minutes of more or less brilliant flying! There was some low flying and aerobatics done in the morning but otherwise the order of the day was formation flying and variations. Separate Flights led by LCDR Bigg-Wither and Lt Dubber were jumped with varying degrees of success by S/Lt's Ferguson and Maitland. The highlight of the day's flying came around 1600 when eight of our Corsairs were seen patrolling together. They consisted of two flights led by Lt Dubber and S/Lt Ferguson while S/Lt Glading jumped them from any cover that was available.

It was somewhat misty all day and at 1800 it looked as if we were in for a storm and a very few flakes of snow fell. Fortunately in less than an hour the sky was quite clear again.

Weather: misty, cold. Duty Runway: 34,27. Hours flown: 32.10.

March 19th

Very cold indeed this morning with a biting wind blowing. It had a bad affect on the aircraft, and starting them developed into a competition to see who could use the least number of cartridges. Though this rather spoilt the morning, the rest of the day was very successful and the total number of hours was exactly 26.

S/Lt Hartshorn and Lt Dubber went low flying during the day but apart from this the Squadron worked hard at patrol formations. S/Lt Crosskill jumped a flight led by Lt Dubber. Crosskill did not find this formation for some time and during this period an ambitious Wildcat, very probably from Lewiston, took his place. In the afternoon 7 Corsairs flew together quite successfully. LCDR Bigg-Wither led the Red Flight consisting of four planes and S/Lt Blaikie's Blue Flight(3 aircraft).

Brunswick traffic circle became rather a shambles late in the afternoon and certainly for a time the Tower was completely foxed. At one moment there were 7 Corsairs waiting to land, most of them not in contact with the Tower, an Avenger and a Ventura who was making an emergency landing. Any number of Corsairs had to go round again & we hear that S/Lt Blaikie even had several red rockets fired at him. The Tower sounded very agitated but it all ended happily.

The only casualty was 7 X-Ray which damaged it's elevators in an unfortunate ground loop. S/Lt Crosland was taxiing this aircraft past the graveyard by Hangar 3 when one brake went flat, the tail swung round and hit an old Corsair engine which happened to be in the way. That's our second accident due entirely to brake trouble. Weather: v. cold but fine; Duty Runway: 34, 27, 21. Hrs flown: 26.00

Weather: V. Cold but fine  
 Duty Runway: 34, 27, 21.  
 Hrs flown: 26.00

March 20th

Today is supposed to be the first day of Spring but this is hard to believe. It has been snowing hard all day and by this evening there are about five inches of the stuff everywhere and it's cold. Prospects for flying tomorrow are not good

Commander Shaw C.in.C Fleet Air Arm training in the U.S. paid a visit to USNAS BRUNSWICK. He spoke to Pilots of 732 Squadron and gave them a certain amount of 'gen' rather humourously too, we hear. Weather: snowing hard, cold.

March 21st

This morning it didn't look as if there would be any flying, but a bevy of snow-ploughs were soon hard at work and by 1045 eight of our aircraft were airborne. All Pilots carried out the same exercise this morning, a sort of combination of range

estimation and testing of camera guns. These seemed to have worked successfully except in one or two cases: all names politely withheld!

Range and Line estimation exercises occupied the entire afternoon and in spite of a late start, the final total of flying hours was 25.50.

The game was an American team. We won all the singles matches and two out of three doubles. The Badminton! games were all very even and it was a very enjoyable evening. It is hoped that the Sports Officer will see about some more tournaments of this sort.  
Weather: mild & fine. Runway: 27. Hrs flown: 25.50.

March 22nd Chorus of 1841 Squadron Officers, "Oh! What a beautiful morning!" And it certainly was. The Squadron flew continuously both morning and afternoon; mostly exercises in ranging and sighting were carried out but there was also some formation flying and a little aerobatics.

A Fortress flying in NL3 area didn't escape the notice of certain Pilots. They interrupted their aerobatics to attack it and at one time there were at least four Corsairs rallying round. This didn't bother the Fortress.

At about 1400, the Tower forgot all about the effects of wind on aircraft landing and several of the Squadron came in practically downwind. Any number of wave-offs were observed but eventually everyone pancaked safely. Rather a nice story from 732 Squadron this morning about S/Lt Burton who requested that his lunch be sent up at 1330, after the Tower had 'advised' him to go round again four times!

7 Peter mysteriously damaged a flap. S/Lt Crosland is still trying to discover how. It is reported that he landed with one wheel in the rough, however.  
Weather: mild & fine. Duty Runway: 34,21. Hrs flown: 30.30.

March 23rd Yesterday evening there were reports from No. 1 Hangar of iron filings or rust in the petrol. In spite of this alarm the Squadron practised attacks, and range and line estimation.

In the afternoon Operations advised all planes to remain on the ground because of an approaching storm of snow and sleet. This came about 1400 & there was no more hope of flying. Red Flight attended a lecture by an American technician on the Corsair's radio. He was one of Lt Warrick's "cricketing types"! Yellow Flight went to the Engineering Hangar to learn about the engine of the Corsair. Blue Flight were at the Synthetic Building. Pilots were secured about 1615.

S/Lt McLisky had some engine trouble this morning and landed at Lewiston with his wingman S/Lt Glading following him in. He took off again very soon and both aircraft landed at Brunswick safely.

Weather: overcast turning to snow & sleet. Runway: 21. Hrs flown: 8.00.

March 24th The Squadron flew continuously today. Formation, attack and aerobatic exercises were carried out, and the total for the day was just over the average.

S/Lt(A) G.H. Barton R.N.V.R. and S/Lt(A) D.N. Chrysler R.C.N.V.R. were killed in a midair collision while on a formation flight. They were both members of 1841 Squadron but were training with 732.

Weather: clear and calm. Duty Runways: 34, 27, 21. Hours flown: 27.15

March 25th In the morning a patrol formation led by S/Lt(A) Ferguson was jumped by the C.O. NOTE: It's reported that the inued in the afternoon and some more patrol formation as well.

CO never found this formation! S/Lt Crosskill landed with his wheels up. The Tower attempted to warn him by R.T., red lights and even Verrey lights but it failed. 7 How returns once more to the Engineering Hangar. Unfortunately, this aircraft is a Corsair II. It is her second belly landing : her undercarriage folded up when the Ferry Pilots flew her in at the beginning of the month. S/Lt E.H. Humphries was married today in Bethlehem Penn. Weather:mild, misty below clouds. Duty Runway:27, 21. Hours flown: 24.30.

March 26th

A Finger Fund has been instituted on behalf of the Squadron, all contributions being gratefully received. Fines vary from 5¢ for the odd switch left on, providing this isn't a gun or mag switch which we are all relieved are far more expensive, to \$5 for a complete write-off. So far there have been several reluctant donors. 'No free balls' permitted according to the notice in the Pilot's Room!

Attacks with camera guns was the most common exercise carried out today but there were also some dog-fighting periods as well. The Corsair was fairly warm inside today & we rather wonder what it's going to be like in really hot weather. Weather: warm & fine. Duty Runway: 27. Hours flown: 23.00.

March 27th

Quite a number of Pilots went dog-fighting this morning to the discomfort of an American Army Transport with several Admirals aboard flying in the direction of Portland. One member of the party is reported to have approached within 25' of the Transport which was rather too close for the Army Pilot's liking. By the time the Corsairs had landed, his report arrived here via Portland and Boston. There was also much flap today about members of the Squadron ignoring red lights from the Tower, carrying out aerobatics within five miles of the field and other infractions of the traffic rules, all of which, as the Operations Officer remarked, make life more interesting for the Tower but are illegal and sometimes hazardous. In the morning 8 Corsairs flew patrol formation together. These were made up of Red & Blue Flights under S/Lt's Ferguson and Mattholie. This performance was repeated after lunch by Blue & Yellow Flights, with Lt Dubber leading the latter.

We were glad to have S/Lt Hewetson back after his dose of mumps. He tried out the local Beacon for an hour or so. S/Lt Blaikie is our other source of news for the day. Having taken off & retracted his undercarriage he got caught in the slipstream of the aircraft directly in front and assumed a distinctly tail high attitude! Fortunately he only just caught the propeller blades tips on the deck and was able to circle the field and land safely.

Weather: overcast, hail & rain about 1600. Duty runways: 27, 21. Hrs flown: 24.45.

March 28th

Fair exchange is considered no robbery but it's an incredible nuisance on occasions! Yesterday S/Lt Hewetson returned from mumps: today S/Lt Glading departed with the disease to Hospital.

A very high wind developed today around 1.00 and Pilots had some difficulty in landing on an even keel. Taxiing tested the quality of brakes to the limit and on the whole they stood up very well. The wind prevented any further flying for the day and in the afternoon Red and Yellow Flights visited the assessing room on the far side of the Hangar to see their camera shots. Some of these were extremely surprising! Weather: fine, high wind. Duty Runway: 34. Hours flown: 9.25.

March 29th

We created a record today in flying hours, 41.20! This consisted of attacks and formation work. Our formations nowadays never seem to be made up of less than eight aircraft and twice today we had twelve flying together. In the morning Blue and Yellow flights and S/Lt Capeling were led by Lt Dubber, the C.O. and S/Lt Mattholie on this twelve plane formation. After lunch and for the last period of the day, we again had twelve aircraft up together. This formation could adequately be described as twitchy, particularly on the return journey! One moment we were in Formation II, the next an entire flight had disappeared. It's rather difficult to discover exactly what happened but S/Lt McLisky seemed very worried about his tail unit & S/Lt Bastion, flying just astern of him had an idea that he'd hit something with his propeller. Eventually everyone landed safely. Veteran 7 Sugar is once more taking an active part in proceedings, unfortunately! Weather: fine. Duty runway: 3. Hours flown: 41.20

March 30th

Snow again this morning turning to rain as time went by. Blue Flight had a lecture by a Chance Vought radio technician and Yellow Flight spent the morning in the Synthetic Building. In view of yesterday's good work and the horrible weather, both Pilots and troops were given a Make & Mend. Weather: wet & miserable.

March 31st

It was a fine day with a certain amount of cloud between four and five

thousand feet. The Squadron flew continuously and exercises in patrol formation, section attacks and dog-fighting were carried out. During one of the dog-fighting periods four aircraft of 732 Squadron were observed in Formation III. The temptation was too much for the dog-fighting types who jumped. A wild mêlée ensued, 732 Squadron replying in kind!

S/Lt Crosskill had an unfortunate accident while taxiing 7 Mike to runway 27. His right brake went flat & the tail & tailwheel were damaged as the aircraft ground-looped and came to rest with the tail just over the miniature embankment there. Weather: fine, clouds. Duty runway: 27. Hours flown: 33.15.

TOTAL HOURS FOR MARCH: 439.40  
DAILY AVERAGE: 17.00  
PILOT AVERAGE: 25.00

### April, 1944.

April 1st

April Fool's Day produced nothing very startling in the flying line. Section attacks were practised by the Squadron and the only unusual exercise carried out was a low flying formation flight made up of Blue Flight with S/Lt Mattholie leading. S/Lt Humphries had an hours aerobatics.

The highlight of the day, however eclipsed everything else - our party! Wine flowed, the old songs were sung and at least two pairs of classy bags were torn from their protesting owners. A touching and memorable moment occurred when the C.O., aided rather unsteadily by Lt Dubber and S/Lt Nattholie, 'opened' 1841 Squadron. The ceremony consisted of cutting a handkerchief inscribed with the Squadron number and held for the C.O. by his two aides who swayed uncertainly on the top of the piano. It's hard to say exactly when the party ended, but it straggled on till about midnight, not a few hard drinking types having been carried out long before this. Those present in the more advanced stages of the party, would have seen Lt Dubber a member of the U.S. Navy and S/Lt Bastion & the C.O. respectively, Lieutenant Commander and Sub Lieutenant. In short, a good time was had by all. Our hearty thanks to S/Lt McLisky for the arrangement of this excellent party. Weather: fair. Duty runway: 27, 21. Hours flown: 28.20.

Eleven new aircraft are listed as having joined the Squadron today. They were actually flown in two or three days ago. We were not expecting them for another fortnight or so. They are F3A's, Corsair II's built by Brewster but as water injection.

April 2nd

In spite of a hectic evening yesterday, the Squadron managed to keep the number of flying hours up to average. Patrol formations and section attacks occupied most of the time, but there was some low flying, jumping and slow flying as well.

S/Lt Blaikie in 7 Sugar had a very slight accident. He was taxiing close to the Hangar and as he turned, 7 Sugar's tail came round & hit the Hangar door. Very little damage to our oldest aircraft.

Weather: fine, misty. Duty runway: 27. Hours flown: 26.50.

April 3rd

A fine day but extremely bumpy below 5000'. The C.O. flew to Rockland this morning in the Widgeon and Lt Dubber in 7 George as well. No doubt this has something to do with our approaching ADDL's!

Section attacks occupied some of the morning and apart from this a certain amount of jumping was done. S/Lt Mattholie leading Blue Flight in formation took evasive action in the form of 180° & 360° breaks when attacked by Yellow section (S/Lt's Hartshorn & Ferguson). Red section consisting of S/Lt's Morten & Brown, insisted that they never found Blue Flight, but all members of this Flight confirmed the fact that they were attacked on at least one occasion by four aircraft!

After lunch S/Lt Mattholie led a different Blue Flight on patrol formation. He had no need to break this time though. S/Lt's Crosland and Maitland, who were the jumping section, failed to spot his formation in spite of having practically joined up together over the field! The first three quarters of the last period of the day,



Red Flight led by S/Lt Brown and Blue Flight with S/Lt Blaikie leading, carried out section attacks. At 1640 however, Red Flight was to attack a ground target near Augusta, while Blue Flight was to patrol the area & prevent them coming in. The advantage was with Red Flight and in spite of their attack not being carried out quite as planned, Blue Flight failed to spot them.

7. Sugar had a busy day after yesterday's accident, but damaged a flap landing during the last period. S/Lt Crosland was the Pilot. As usual, a landing light! Weather: fine, clouds after lunch. Duty runway: 34. Hours flown:

April 4th

S/Lt Hewetson flew to Floyd Bennett Field today. He looked rather odd climbing into 7 X-Ray in a Burberry and flying helmet! S/Lt Humphries had quite a day swinging compasses. We've noticed him with his head bent over all sorts of books lately and this is what he's been up to - getting all the gen on compass swinging. He admits that he slipped up at the first attempt & had 27° Deviation, which sounds rather nice. However he really has THE WORD now and recommends compass swinging, as long as the weather is good. The troops approve too because between occasional pushes, there are long intervals of leisure. The concrete Compass Rose is just near the end of the taxiway to runway 27.

Patrol formations were bounced by other sections and section attacks carried out as well as cloud, low and slow flying exercises.

Weather: fine clouds. Duty runway: 21, 27. Hours flown: 25.05. Threatening later.

April 5th

Attacks, slow flying and formation hops were the order of the day. 7 George has been a nuisance lately, with fumes in the cockpit. S/Lt Blaikie took her up today to burn these out. On his return he reported that the condition was improved, but that there was still a lot of filth floating about in the cockpit above 30".

Low flying patrol formations have been indulged in recently by Blue & Yellow Flights. Quite successfully too by all accounts.

Rather spectacular prang on 2 by one of the new types. Fortunately not one of our aircraft though. Even 732 Squadron seem quite glad to get rid of it, the brakes being very bad. The Pilot was dazed and had cuts on the head.

Weather: misty, clouds. Duty runway: 21, 27, 9. Hrs: 27.15

April 6th

A second Badminton Tournament was organised by the Sports Officer in the afternoon. Unfortunately a few types were not present because of flying, but in spite of this most of the games went very successfully. One hotly contested match was a doubles between the C.O. and S/Lt Mattholie and Lt George Lee with Captain Alderman as his partner. The latter is an ace at drop shots and drop services but the C.O. and Matt, both displaying remarkable agility, always seemed to get there. This game was finally won by our side, both of whom looked completely finished. The C.O. however went on to play and win another strenuous singles match with Captain Alderman. S/Lt McLisky thrashed Lt Pollard in a singles match which was very satisfactory. On the whole it was another victory for us and another successful tournament completed. It is hoped that in future everyone will manage to turn up.

Our flying too was profitable today. Red Flight with the C.O. leading tried some low flying patrol formation - rather twitchily! We had one formation of eight aircraft flying just after lunch. The C.O. and S/Lt Mattholie led Red and Blue Flights on this formation. Apart from these exercises, Pilots tried their hands at section attacks, dog-fighting and low flying attacks. S/Lt Hewetson returned from Floyd Bennett Field safely, strange to say, and still wearing that Burberry! Weather: fine, scattered clouds. Duty runway: 34, 27. Hours flown: 38.50.

April 7th

The Squadron flew for just 11½ hours this morning, further flying being impossible because of a very strong wind which gradually increased about lunchtime. The flying time was spent in low flying and section attacks.

After lunch, we all prepared for the Squadron photograph. The troops looking extremely tiddly in No. 1's, were just removing all the chairs from the Pilot's Room when the Photographer rang up to say that the whole thing was off. The wind was too strong apparently and he didn't want his camera knocked about! So all the chairs

came back and we were set free for the weekend. Very nice.  
Weather: fine, windy. Runway: 34. Hrs: 11.35.

Apr 8 to 10th No gen available for this period, but we can use our imagination!

April 11th Unfortunately it was a fine morning and prospects for ADDLing were very good. However, someone had to start some time! Six aircraft with the C.O. leading the first flight, and Lt Dubber the second, left for Sandford at about 1000. Sandford is South West of Brunswick, and about 60 miles away. Good runways, slightly wider but not as long perhaps as the ones here at Brunswick.

The C.O. demonstrated three ADDL's to begin with. Two were very successful but on one he was too close & had to turn very steeply. The fact that there was practically no wind did not help matters. Lt Dubber & S/Lt's Maitland & Ferguson were next. S/Lt Maitland was too close in & only succeeded in touching the deck twice. After rather a doubtful sort of lunch a portable radio(1196) was fixed up on the runway by some of the ratings who arrived by truck about Noon. S/Lt's Brown, Humphries and Ferguson now ADDLed, S/Lt Brown particularly well. S/Lt Ferguson had some trouble after touching down on his seventh ADDL. His left wing stalled twice but he managed to right the aircraft twice & the net result was a damaged flap and aileron. The Corsair was 7 King. Lt Dubber & S/Lt Maitland followed these three ADDLers, and five of the six Corsairs flew back to Brunswick after this, landing about 1700.

Meanwhile at Brunswick, Blue and Yellow Flights practised attacks, patrol formation and dummy low flying attacks! S/Lt Glading had his first hop since mumping. We're very glad to see him back again.

Weather: fine, overcast later. Runway: 34, 27, 21. Hrs flown: 18.15,

We congratulate S/Lt Crosskill on his engagement which was announced on the evening of the 10th.

April 12th Snow on the ground this morning and fairly heavy, cold rain coming down. Absolutely nothing else to report!

April 13th Most of \*Yellow and Blue Flights flew down to Sandford in the morning to try  
\*Yellow Flight their luck and skill at ADDL's. From all accounts, everything went fairly success-  
went out after fully, and any mistakes made by Pilots were the usual ones that one expects when  
lunch to ADDL. ADDLing the Corsair for the first time. The commonest fault was coming in too fast  
but this will soon disappear - or will it? - as practice makes perfect. As always,  
the Batsman has to be extremely nimble, and if safety first was all we were botherin  
about, he should definitely have a big hole to jump into, in case of emergency. Most  
Do They? Pilots will agree that the experience of watching by the edge of the runway is far  
worse than the actual ADDL! Blue Flight returned before lunch & in the afternoon  
Yellow Flight went to Sandford, ADDLed and came back safely. Here at Brunswick,  
there was very little flying because of a shortage of aircraft, most of them being  
used by the party at Sandford. S/Lt's Brown and Glading were the two types flying  
at Brunswick: they staged in and out of the clouds for an hour or so. The C.O. was  
at Sandford all day and was busy ADDLing or Batting. He flew there and back in the  
Widgeon and took some members of the Squadron with him.

S/Lt's Ferguson and Connolly started harmonising guns today in readiness for air-firing, which is to begin fairly soon. It was hoped that each Pilot would see this job being done on his own aircraft, but in some cases the right person couldn't be found at the right time.

In the afternoon(late afternoon), a game of football was arranged between a team of Officers and ratings. A high wind and light ball didn't make the first game of the season any easier, but thanks to S/Lt Crosland who scored 3 or our 4 goals, we won 4-1. Crosland however cannot be congratulated on his physical condition! On one occasion he actually fell down from sheer exhaustion while dribbling towards the goal. But he wasn't the only member who was exhausted by the time we stopped. The game itself was good fun but there weren't sufficient boots to go round & no shorts or shirts for the troops. We hope the Sports Officer will have begged, pinched or borrowed some equipment by our next attempt.

Weather: clouds & windy. Runway: 34, 27. Hrs: 19.05.

April 14th

There was a high wind today and at Sandford it was blowing about 40° across the Duty Runway. ADDL's were managed fairly successfully in the morning in spite of this but in the afternoon S/Lt Hewetson tried for 5 minutes and then landed. The morning ADDL's went moderately well but the usual faults of being too fast was there as yesterday. S/Lt Morten created a sensation or general twitch when his brake failed while revving up for take-off. His aircraft came straight for the Batsman, the portable radio & the spectators, all of whom fled hastily. Morten however soon had his tail up & steered the aircraft back on to the runway.

S/Lt Maitland flew to Roosevelt Field to fetch some radio connections for the 1196. These were packed in a cardboard box 1½'x1½'x1' and to get them in the Corsair one of the transmitters had to be removed and the box pushed in behind. The transmitter was then replaced & the seat put back!

At Brunswick, S/Lt Mattholie took S/Lt's Reeve and Blaikie up for section attacks. The Armament Officers continued organising the harmonisation of guns.  
Weather: fine, very windy. Duty runway:(34) 27. Hrs flown: 24.55.

April 15th

Today is the anniversary of the opening of USNAS Brunswick and it is to be celebrated in a suitable way! In the morning a parade was held in front of the Ad. Building with 732, 1841 & 1842 Squadrons present. As usual, the troops in their No. 1's were very smart & though their marching wasn't exactly up to Guards' standards, they were miles ahead of our Allies, the U.S.M.C. not excepted! We noticed that the Colours escort had difficulty in keeping step as well!

In the evening a party was held in the Officers Club. Cocktails first and then Dinner and speeches which were broadcast. After Dinner the floor was cleared for dancing. Altogether it was a very good party, and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. The band was excellent, particularly towards the end of the evening. We were very glad to see S/Lt Humphries' wife at the party and S/Lt Crosskills' fiancée

There were any number of humorous incidents, but probably the one which received most publicity was the ditching of the Jeep by LCDR Waller RN, C.O. 732 Squadron. The front wheels were well stuck in the ditch & the situation wasn't improved by his accelerating with the gear lever in first! This resulted in a deeper hole & showers of mud spraying out from the wheels. Eventually he gave up & everyone, male & female got out. A little later Lt Dubber tried a new method of moving the offending Jeep. He fetched a small truck, attached a rope between it and the Jeep, and pulled. The rope broke & the truck went into the mud on the opposite side of the road! Unfortunately he didn't get stuck! Finally, the large crash truck came along and lifted the Jeep out bodily.

There was no flying during the day at all. Some of the Squadron were up just before lunch. Correction: The C.O. flew to Roosevelt Field & back.  
Weather: fine, overcast & finally rain. Hrs: 2.30.

April 16th

\*Second.

S/Lt's McLisky, Glading, Hewetson, Bastion and Crosland ADDLed here at Brunswick this morning, much to the agitation of the Tower. McLisky's left wing stalled at about 10' on his \*ninth ADDL. The wing hit the ground at the same time as the left wheel & the tyre burst with the impact, but somehow McLisky managed to keep the aircraft on the runway. He even taxied in with damaged wing, burst tyre and all. His aircraft was 7 Love and she will have to have a new wing.

After lunch we has seven more people at ADDL's in groups of three or two at a time. Nothing very extraordinary to say about these. At about 1545 it began to rain and we had to stop.

Weather: overcast, drizzle. Runway: 30. Hrs: 5.30.

P.S. S/Lt Hewetson burst a tyre while taxiing in but he reached the Hangar safely. The afternoon ADDL's were watched with interest - and despair! - by S/Lt Crosland (S.D.O.), C.P.O. Mutton and Larry Burney, all of whom were standing on the roof of the Hangar. The Chief could often be seen with his hands over his eyes when abnormally large bounces occurred. Seven Corsair II's had their guns butt tested today. They were C, G, H, K, O, P, S. Trouble was experienced with the guns jumping from their mount in C and O.

April 17th

Very low ceiling this morning and we could not carry out our splash firing as planned. 732 Squadron managed a few ADDL's, but the Tower stopped them, much to 'Doc' Davis's annoyance. In the afternoon 732 managed some more ADDL's & we butt tested more aircraft - B, C, O. The two latter whose mountings had been troublesome yesterday, were found to be firing correctly. The Armament Officers find that 7 Fox cannot be harmonised with the present patterns since some of the guns are touching the blast tubes. It's now been decided that they'll use the revised Chance Vought pattern. Which means more work for the Ordnance ratings, some of whom have been working very late indeed.  
Weather: low cloud, rain & drizzle. Runway: 21.

Lt Dubber & S/Lt Mattholie took off after lunch to see what the weather was doing. At 1400 Red Flight attended a lecture by Mr. Lowe, an Engineer from the Chance Vought Company. He will be here for a week and is giving a series of lectures to Pilots of 1841, 1842 & 732 Squadrons. The lectures deal particularly with the fuel, hydraulics induction and electrical systems in the Corsair. Two new points Red Flight gathered about the emergency fuel pump: it should be used at high altitude & must be on if a droppable tank is in use.

April 18th

We began air firing today with a series of splashes in Area Peter. These were done first with full ammunition, and then with tracer. On the whole the guns fired fairly well and any stoppages that did occur, weren't serious. Pilots found that the aircraft jumped quite considerably with all six guns all going off together. Other flying for the day was limited to one patrol formation led by S/Lt Mattholie and some aerobatics carried out by S/Lt Reeve.

Altogether fourteen Pilots tried out their guns at this splash firing and in addition B & P were butt tested successfully.  
Weather: fine. Runways: 34, 27. Hours: 25.00.

April 19th

Some interesting drogue towing efforts were observed today. S/Lt Mattholie took off first to see how the Corsair felt with a sleeve attached. Apart from forgetting his undercarriage and his prop control, the take-off was a success. He dropped the drogue correctly too, but landed his aircraft & left it, forgetting such minor details as raising the wing flaps, opening cowl flaps, dropping his hook & turning off sundry little switches. (These things have to be confirmed, but it's believed that he admits them). S/Lt Hartshorn dealt successfully with his tow & S/Lt's Ferguson & Maitland led by the C.O. fired at it: S/Lt Ferguson was the only one to have anything to show for it! And he only had one gun firing. S/Lt Maitland took off with a nice long towline attached to his aircraft, but not drogue. He hadn't given the Ordnance P.O. time, literally, to get his finger extracted from the drogue, which he was still tying to the line! Fortunately he wasn't caught. S/Lt Maitland's next attempt was more successful, but even then the rope broke over, or near Bath & he had to return. Finally S/Lt Hewetson attempted two take-offs with a drogue. In the first, he swerved off runway 34, writing off two landing lights on the way, over the rough, across runway 30 and into more rough ground, where he stopped. No apparent damage, so he returned for another shot. Another swerve resulted, but he stopped on the runway this time & returned for one further attempt, which was successful. Three Pilots & aircraft had then to be found to go and shoot at this tow. The days flying cost the field three landing lights, a third being broken by S/Lt Maitland in 7 Baker, and no doubt the Tower was anxious, as usual.

The following aircraft were butt tested today: A, M, R, T, Z, S, G. Z and S were the only ones that were troublesome.  
Weather: fine, varying wind. Runways: 27, 34. Hours: 20.55.

April 20th

The Squadron flew and fired long and hard all day. Drogues were continually dropping on the field or rising up over the trees. There was a little splash firing but mostly the day's exercises consisted of attacks on the drogue. Scores seem to be improving already.  
Weather: fine. Duty runway: 27. Hours: 35.15

April 21st

The morning was spent in more air firing exercises - attacks on the drogue.

Report to me immediately re this point. It's no lie!

None had any difficulty towing and Pilots seem to have the clue on this by now.

The firing range was closed in the afternoon because of low cloud and bad visibility, and it was decided to spend the entire afternoon doing ADDL's. We began at almost 1400, with first detail and S/Lt Glading, the last ADDLER was back at Hangar 2 by about 1700. It was drizzling most of the time and it was also extremely cold miserable out on runway 21. The C.O., Lt Dubber and for a short time S/Lt Mattholie dealt with the 'Batting'. Each Pilot managed about eight or nine ADDL's before he landed & remained on the deck. Vapour trails or vortices from the wings were often seen when the Corsairs had landed & were going round again. Weather: clouds & drizzle. Runways: 21, 27. Hrs: 21.50.

April 22nd

The entire Squadron went off on a large and highly successful Balbo today. At the same time we collected 61 hours of flying and also gave the troops a sort of holiday and display combined. This is roughly what happened.

First, all our 18 Corsair III's were serviceable, and in addition we still had two of the old I's, which should correctly have been returned to the Servicing Unit before this. However, all's fair in love and war, and we took to the air about 9.45 on this beautiful morning with 20 aircraft to our credit! The Squadron was divided up for the exercise in the following way: the C.O. led Maestro Squadron which was made up of three flights of four aircraft, Red, Blue and Yellow. S/Lt's Ferguson & Brown were the respective leaders of Yellow and Blue Flights. Maestro Squadron was to provide close escort protection for LCDR 'Doc' Stuart R.N.V.R. and his 12 TBF's. Medium cover was dealt with by Kent Flight led by S/Lt Mattholie, while Sussex Flight with Lt Dubber leading provided high cover.

The 'tell-off' on the line was almost as good as a brigade of guards numbering from left to right! Sussex and Kent Flights took off first, followed very soon by the C.O. and Maestro Squadron. Our join up was even more surprising than the radio tell-off, and by 1000 or thereabouts, the C.O. had set course for Biddeford and all 20 Corsairs were in tight formation passing over USNAS Brunswick.

So we were early for the TBF's, who finally turned up about 1030. Almost directly they set course for Cape Cod, and Maestro Squadron and Kent and Sussex Flights took up their positions. Maestro Blue to Port, Maestro Yellow to Starboard and Maestro Red Flight astern of Doc's Squadron, where much rocking of wings & general twitchiness resulted once or twice from the TBF's slipstreams. These were flying in three shallow Vics, line astern of each other and looked very pretty. However, they weren't going fast enough for our Corsairs, and the C.O. began to make almost 90° turns with Red Flight as he wove backwards and forwards. After a little while, Lt Dubber requested permission for Sussex Flight to bounce the bombers. This was given and from then on, one was likely to see a section of Corsairs streaking down through the formation or attacking from astern. As Cape Cod came into sight, Sussex 4 reported a Bogey 10 o'clock down. In fact he was continually reporting bogey's throughout the flight! This particular bogey turned out to be a U.S. Navy Airship peacefully patrolling.

Before reaching Boston we closed up into tight formation, and circled the city. The TBF's then broke off and landed at Squantum, and we followed them in. We all found the duty runway short and like a sort of old Roman Road for bumps. One definitely felt we had broken something during the landing run. The last man in created quite a stir by doing a magnificent approach with his wheels up. Everyone leaning out of windows to watch, and every Pilot already on the deck silently beseeching him not to. He didn't fortunately!

We waited some time for lunch and afterwards had a discussion with Doc Stuart about the exercise. The main problem seems to be the difference between the economical cruising speeds of the TBF and the Corsair. Vigorous weaving is the answer. The possibility of another exercise was brought up, this time with an attack to be carried out at the end.

The Corsairs had been fuelled almost as soon as we had taxied in, and by 1430 19 of them were airborne. The remaining aircraft was U/S because of trouble with the

exhaust stacks. It actually took off an hour later and was back at Brunswick at 1630. Again our join-up was quick & in no time we were heading for home in tight Formation II. Once clear of Boston, the C.O. put us into line abreast and we went down low for some time trying some 90° and 180° turns. We formed up again in tight Formation II over Portland and circled Brunswick field several times for the benefit of the troops. The Chief didn't think we looked as good this time as we had in the morning after our quick join-up. However, we thought we were pretty good and the troops seemed to approve! We broke up in turn and landed on runway 21 where there was a nice cross-wind to welcome us back. All the Corsair III's landed safely but E wrote off one landing light with it's tailwheel, slight damage resulting to the tailwheel fairing. We must give her back very quickly to the Servicing Unit!

It was very nice to have S/Lt's Harrison, Hall, Woodward and Boynes flying with us on this remarkable Balbo. We hope they enjoyed it as much as we did!  
Weather: fine & smooth - for once! Duty runway: 30, 21. Hours: 61.40.

April 23rd

Another hard day of air firing, drogues dropping all over the place. Everyone fired once and most Pilots twice: S/Lt Brown fired four times and towed once! Scores we regret to say, didn't seem to be improving and people are beginning to suggest that the aircraft they fire with be re-harmonised! Particularly if they've been scoring 0% fairly regularly.

S/Lt Hartshorn set some of Damariscove Island well and truly alight about 1600 & when S/Lt Maitland flew there a little later, the flames were nearing the coast! Our aircraft, in fact, left fires burning which could be seen 20 miles away!  
Weather: fine, warm. Duty runways: 30, 16. Hours: 35.25.

S/Lt Jack Crosskill left for New York yesterday on orders from Washington. We are extremely sorry to lose him & wish him the best of luck for the future.

April 24th

There was a beautiful programme of air firing planned for this morning but it had to be cancelled because of the weather. Half a dozen lucky people went to strafe Damariscove Island again but it's not reported how much of it they destroyed. The rest of the morning we spent doing ADDL's while the weather became worse and worse. Finally about 1130 the Tower sent word that sleet was coming and that it was then a Portland. So we stopped and everyone came in looking very wet and miserable.

By lunchtime the sleet and snow had arrived and the Squadron was given a Make and Mend. Weather: lousy. Duty runway: 21. Hours: 6.30.

### **ANZAC DAY - Very Memorable**

April 25th

We began another nice programme of air firing this morning quite cheerfully but the ceiling lowered about 1030 or so and we had to desist. Our 30 odd hours of flying for the day were therefore made up of patrol formations, aerobatics, low flying and more section attacks. S/Lt Reeve went up after lunch to inspect the weather over the range, but it was still poor. The C.O. led 8 aircraft on a patrol formation later in the afternoon, S/Lt Mattholie leading the second flight. A new type of inverted T formation was tried out during this exercise. It turned out to be fairly easy to fly as far as 180°, 90° and 45° turns were concerned, but 'breaks' present any number of difficulties. However, as the C.O. remarked, it'll be worthwhile giving it a trial & working out some methods for breaking.

S/Lt Harry Griffin (definitely the Empire Building type!) organised a very nice little party to celebrate this great day. It was an extremely sober affair to start with & we were pleased to have LCDR(A) Swain R.N. and his wife with us for a short time. It wasn't till the latter had left & more types had joined us from Lt Warrick's lecture in the O Club that things began to happen! 2300 might be called zero hour. It was then that S/Lt Wheway's (1842 Sqdn) trousers were torn from him! This started it and seconds later everyone at the party above the rank of Lt seemed to be sporting shirt tails. Even the Marine Major joined the happy throng & afterwards stood on a chair & sang a song at which everyone roared. It was all extremely funny, rather like an illustration in a Thorne Smith. The First Lieutenant came in about 1115 complete with Burberry & cap & was immediately had. We discovered later that he'd been sent by

Spelling? the S.B.N.O. to quell the riot! The S.B.N.O. himself appeared moments afterwards & much to our regret, the party had to break up. However the rendering of a Moari Haka by LCDR's Evans and Bigg-Wither is one of a number of episodes we won't forget in a hurry. And there were many others. Definitely a MEMORABLE party!  
Weather: low overcast, drizzle. Runways: 34, 27. Hrs: 30.15.

April 26th Weather in the morning wasn't suitable for air firing and the Squadron practise low flying - entire Yellow Flight led by Lt Dubber - patrol formation, section attack and so on. After lunch the range was clear and air firing continued not quite until dusk but until 1745! No doubt 1842 were just taking off at this time!  
Weather: fine, clouds. Runway: 3, 34. Hrs: 33.15.

April 27th Today saw us knock up our 1000th hour. S/Lt Barrie Brown (Bonnie Scotland again) was responsible & this feat was celebrated later in the Club\*.

The Squadron fired at the drogue all day long & put in plenty of hours. Last month 25 flying hours was a good total, now it's definitely poor!  
Weather: fine & warm. Runways: 3, 16, 34. Hrs: 40.15.

\* The reward for putting up the thousandth hour is to buy the entire Squadron a round of drinks. This increases directly as the tears! 2000 - 2 rounds, 3000 - 3 rounds & so on. Who's idea was this anyway?

April 28th Most of the day was spent in air firing, most types completing their series of 8 shoots. That completes quarter attacks and we'll have a rest from air firing for some time.

There was also some patrol formation, Lt Dubber leading some of Yellow Flight. The 'T' formation seems to become more popular as time goes by. The C.O. and Lt Dubber flew to Concord where they are concocting some super Balbo for us in the near future! Some dog fighting was done late in the afternoon by S/Lt's Glading & Hewetson, Morten and Maitland.  
Weather: fine, cloud at 4000'. Runways: 21, 27.

April 29th We all have a clearer idea today what the C.O. and Lt Dubber have been scheming about at Concord, New Hampshire! It's a sort of Air Pageant in which 1841 Squadron is the star turn, and a recruiting drive for the Army Air Forces combined! It's a bit odd having a Royal Naval Squadron to get recruits for the Army Air Corps and particularly at Concord.

We had a Make & Mend in the afternoon and the morning was spent in practising for tomorrow's show. Unfortunately our formation flying wasn't up to standard, but of course we know it'll be O.K. on the day! S/Lt's Mattholie, Hewetson and Blaikie with Lt Dubber are the aerobatic experts and they went out before lunch to try out "feathers", rolls, upward Charlies, loops and so on. The rest of the Squadron split up into flights of four & beat up any objects they could find in Area Peter, finishing off with an upward Charlie. An American Destroyer was unlucky enough to be in that area at the time.  
Weather: mild, fine. Runways: 3, 34. Hrs: 27.05

We congratulate S/Lt Jack Crosskill on his marriage which took place today in Lewiston. The Squadron wishes him health and happiness in the years to come. We also hope that he succeeds in getting a passage home for his bride. He is now at the Barbizon waiting for orders. Quite a number of the Squadron were at the reception and S/Lt A.C. Ralston was Best Man.

April 30th More practice this morning for the show at Concord this afternoon. Alas! not very much improvement on yesterday. True the radio went completely haywire and in addition, it was very bumpy, but still: the dress rehearsal being something of a shambles, the thing itself will be superb!

For the occasion, we borrowed four Pilots and four aircraft from 732. The Pilots were S/Lt's Woodward, Harrison, Ralston and Boynes. The Squadron was divided up as follows: the C.O. led Maestro Red Flight with S/Lt's Morten and Woodward as his other two Flight Leaders. Bint Flight had Lt Dubber leading & Gibbet Flight S/Lt Mattholie.

The tell-off and join up went quite well and by 1430 we were on course for Concord. We had flown over Brunswick in Formation II and then split up into Formation III with Maestro Blue & Yellow Flights flying as medium and high covers. We passed over the field at Concord still in Formation III & when we hoped we were just out of sight turned almost 180° & changed to the T formation. Flying over the field for the second time, the Squadron did a 90° turn and closed up in Formation II, Maestro Yellow Flight just joining up in time to break away! Unfortunately only 12 aircraft were actually to land; Blue & Yellow Flights were the unlucky types and after one circuit of the field they broke off & headed home. Except S/Lt's McLisky and Morten, those sturdy N.Z.'s, who were to dog fight each other before returning. This performance went down excellently, with the crowd who gaped in wide-mouthed wonder at our Podge stalling out of his turns & Mack practically falling on top of him. Then, of course, there was a Yank commentator making suitable remarks.

The types landed in fairly orthodox manner save for a certain number of wave-offs due in some cases to telephone wires and in others to a crosswind. Everyone folded their wings as they crossed on to the grass strip just in front of the spectators & S/Lt Reeves neatly hit his prop at this point. The crowd were very impressed. But this was easy to do for they didn't seem exactly air minded & certainly not Corsair minded. One individual remarked to the C.O. that he supposed the gunners were located inside the wings!

C.A.P. officials organised things & they were aided by scores of sort of A.T.C. Cadets who dashed about saluting any type who wasn't occupied in signing autographs or having his "picture took". Judging by the number of cameras clicked, we'll have enough to fill the Line Book to overflowing. All Pilots in search of liquid refreshment rushed to the nearest Coke machine, which promptly ran out. A mad rush followed to a travelling Buffet which was quite dry and then to a drinking fountain with a mile long queue. Finally the types were taken into Concord & fed on coffee & lemon cake.

The Corsairs were started with the aid of one fire extinguisher and one mechanic who gave the thumbs-up very efficiently. Stones, dust, shit & derision were hurled at the spectators who stood 30 odd yards astern! Everyone wrapped up their turns off the deck & the crowd ran each time a Corsair went past. Two flights peeled off beat up the field and finished off with upward Charlies while the other four aircraft flown by Lt Dubber & S/Lt's Mattholie, Hewetson and Blaikie - our aerobatic aces - circled waiting for their turn. Their combined effort was a feather of a roll off the top by the leader of the "Vic" and upward Charlies outwards by the wingmen. Very effective. They finished up with their own individual displays - rolls off the top, upward Charlies, rolls and so on.

Indeed everything went down well with the crowd, even the filth that was showered upon them when the Corsairs started up. We hope we're in the local papers too! Weather: fine, hazy. Runway: 27. Hrs: 51.00.

S/Lt(A) W.K. Capeling R.N.V.R. died early this morning in hospital as a result of injuries sustained in a crash while ADDLING at Bar Harbour yesterday. He was attached to 1841 but was training with 732 Squadron.

#### BRITISH NAVY PLANES STUNT AT AIR SHOW.

Corsair Pilots Thrill  
Spectators at Airport

Thousands Turn Out to  
Witness First CAP  
Maneuvers Here

Concord Women Sworn In-  
to Air Wacs During the  
Matinee Programme

#### Simulated "dog fights".

At an Altitude of five thousand feet two of the Corsairs engaged in a simulated dog-fight which could be observed from any point in the city. In addition to the crowd that made its way to the field - estimated at more than fifteen thousand - countless others viewed the sight from vantage points in the city, from roof tops and front porches...and from Main street.

Dives and half rolls, upside down - flying, snap-rolls, close formation flying (one of the most difficult of maneuvers), vertical climbs, "Brake-offs", rolling while flying - these were some of the stunts that delighted those who stayed to the end.



A squadron of young British Royal Navy pilots flying one of the world's fastest fighter planes, the Corsair, brought aerial warfare close to home for thousands of spectators at Concord first air show yesterday.

Climaxing Civil Air Patrol maneuvers that had started at 10 o'clock that morning, the flight of 20 'planes, under the leadership of squadron Commander Richard Bigg-Wither, came in over the municipal airport precisely at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Flying in an "Inverted T formation, 12 of the 20 powerful fighters landed on the runway at 20 second intervals while the other eight, which had provided the "Top cover", "peeled off"; and, under orders, returned to the base after an impressive demonstration of combat formations.

Coming in along the fence on the north end of the field, where milling crowds pressed, tightly-packed, against the guard rail eager for a close up of the British fliers-the planes presented a sharp grim contrast to the line of light CAP aircraft drawn up on the line to the south of the main hangar.

As the Corsairs rolled to a rest, their wings folded automatically, reminding spectators that these fighters are designed for operations from carriers.

Personnel of the squadron under Commander Bigg-Wither has been trained in this country, is ready for combat duty and scheduled to go overseas soon. So the tall, youngish leader told the crowd when he was introduced over the loud-speaker by Captain Arthur Cheney, N.H. Wing staff office and "Master of Ceremonies" for the maneuvers.

Two hours later, following a series of CAP demonstrations, and the Meistro Squadron went into the air and "put on a show", improvised by the commander, before wheeling and making for the home base.

Not until all units of the New Hampshire Wing, CAP, had formed for the review which completed the eight hour show did Commander Bigg-Wither and his fliers make their departure, coming in over the field at under 100 ft. pulling out in a slow roll.

Army Flier Thrills Crowd.

While the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve ships' were grounded, the throng was treated to an exhibition of stunt flying by Lieutenant Dan Kennedy former Boston Newspaper man, who joined the AAF and saw action in Africa and Italy, where he completed fifty missions as a combat pilot.

Flying an Army attack bomber, Lieutenant Kennedy zoomed over the field in a ground-straffing exhibition that gave the crowd an uncomfortable idea of what the real thing was like.

May 1st

Flying today was all odds and ends & even included some night flying! In the morning, everyone patrol formed into NL4 Area which we all had difficulty finding even on a map, and then had dog fights with each other. Later, S/Lt Connolly and Glading bounced formations led by S/Lt's Blaikie & Hewetson. Bags of natter over the R.T., many falsetto "Whoop-ees!" from a certain N.Z. included!

After lunch 8 types flew down to Bar Harbour & tried some emergency landings. No actual landings were made, however, just the approach & a descent to within about 20 or 30 feet of the runway. The Corsair certainly comes down fast but, it's still possible to overshoot as some people found.

About 2000, S/Lt Mattholie took off in 7 How for our first attempt at night flying. He circled a few times while sundry Catalina's came in to land and taxi back along the duty runway, much to everyone's annoyance. Matt made one dummy run along the runway without touching, one touch and go and a final landing. On this he bounded a little and his left wing stalled. We heard it scraping along the runway and the aircraft went off to the right coming to a stop on runway 27. Total damage: a burst tyre and pranged Port wing and flaps.

This shook us all but we have bold men in our Squadron! The C.O. took another aircraft, taxied out and took off. His landings were very nice, even when he forgot to lock his tailwheel and we heard it rattling down the runway. He rang up the runway control with a sigh of relief after his first attempt, and then remarked that he

owed 25¢ to the Finger Fund!

Lt Dubber followed and he was successful too, though his technique differed from the C.O.'s. He landed on his wheels & kept the tail up as long as possible before letting it down. After Dubber's final landing, we adjourned for the evening. Night flying for the types! Whoopee!!

Weather: overcast. Runways: 21, 27. Hrs: 40.45.

May 2nd

From now on we're returning to ADDL again for enjoyment. LCDR Whelpley R.N. who will be Bats Officer on the CHARGER when we land-on, is at Brunswick at the moment and will be batting our ADDL's from today. Seven Pilots flew to Bar Harbour in the morning & ADDLed continually, four in the circuit at a time. Section attacks, aerobatics and divers test hops were also carried out by the Squadron. The C.O. flew to Squantum.

More night flying this evening. On this occasion the lucky lads were S/Lt's Mattholie, Ferguson, Hewetson and Crosland. Everything was O.K. No prangs, no accidents, and no twitches - at least not many! Those flying for the first time soon realised that one has to depend on the Batsman completely. They didn't relish the idea of landing now if he isn't there.

Weather: fine, then overcast. Runways: 21, 27. Hrs: 32.35

May 3rd

8 people flew to Bar Harbour early this morning and ADDLed until almost 1130. They didn't get lost on the way as did S/Lt Connolly yesterday, but one flight led by S/Lt Reeve certainly went the longest way round! ADDL's went quite well, S/Lt McLisky starring particularly. Meanwhile, S/Lt's Brown, Hartshorn and Bastion threw their Corsairs all over the sky in area NL4. After lunch, four two-plane sections took off to practise attacks. One section flying wide line abreast, as the wingmen of a large bomber formation. It was enormous fun & in spite of the fact that they seemed to be dozens of single Corsairs making attacks, each section kept together very well. Unfortunately the bombers behaved too much like fighters & took very violent evasive action. The same thing was repeated later & more successfully. In this case the bombers were instructed to fly at a sensible speed, only do gentle turns & no cross-unders.

Four more types for night flying this evening, S/Lt's Maitland, Brown, Hartshorn and Blaikie. Faults were coming in too fast & making the whole thing too much of an ADDL. No prangs except S/Lt Mattholie in the Jeep who drove at high speed into some artificial sand dunes near the Tower! Coffee & sandwiches ordered for the intrepid night flyers somehow got locked up in the O Club & they partook of a hot meal in the troop's Mess instead.

Weather: fine, cool. Runway: 21. Hrs: 43.40

May 4th

We ADDLed all day & it was extremely nice at Bar Harbour, with the sun shining and the sky and water keeping delightfully blue the whole time. Corsairs turning in, banging down and roaring off again in noisy succession. S/Lt Blaikie did one rather unfortunate landing during the day. He was coming down rather fast and failed to check his aircraft, whose Port wing stalled. Though the wingtip & flap appeared to touch the ground, there was no visible damage. However, after he'd landed, stopped and begun taxiing back next time, his Port tyre went completely flat.

Night flying was something of a massacre! 7 George ran into 7 Fox, which was parked without lights by the side of the runway. 7 George now needs a new propeller 7 Fox an entire new Port wing. Definitely an unhappy mishap! Seven Baker was pranged by some novice driving one of the small tractors while she was already u/s in the Hangar. Fortunately most of the shock was taken by the tyre, but fairings on the undercarriage & tail are damaged.

Weather: fine, warm, misty. Duty runways: 21, 34. Hrs: 44.50.

S/Lt James Blaikie was badly shaken about Noon today when he landed on runway He happened to swing to the right & just as he did so, another Corsair flashed past on it's take off run. This was 5 Victor from 732 Squadron. Jimmy admits that he suffered from severe twitch the rest of the day. It's not a good idea to have cabs landing & taking off in opposite directions on the same runway at the same time!

May 5th

ADDL's continued today but we were rather late in getting out to Bar Harbour because of bad visibility. Everyone's ADDL's are gradually improving & people are coming round the turn at speeds that would have given many of us the twitch a month ago! Some section attacks were also practised, but ADDL's are still THE THING at the moment.

The C.O., Lt Dubber & S/Lt Mattholie went formation flying tonight. Mattholie & the C.O. joined up successfully, but in spite of much advice over the radio, Dubber couldn't find the other two. Four other lucky types were doing controlled landings while this was going on.

Weather: hot, hazy. Runways: 21, 27. Hrs: 34.35.

May 6th

We'd planned to go out to Bar Harbour for ADDL's, but there was fog all along the coast & the field was closed. So practically everyone put in their quota of ADDL's here at Brunswick instead.

Three members of the Squadron almost went to a watery grave in the afternoon! They had been doing attacks in very poor visibility & were letting down to see how high the ceiling was. Diving pretty steeply, they were practically in the drink before they saw it & all pulled up pretty violently with the full & complete twitch - for a moment anyway. S/Lt Crosland was a member of this party and found he was unable to keep up with the rest. The result was that he was soon lost. However he found a member of 1843 Squadron flying around & joined up on him before returning to Brunswick. The Chief examined the engine & found that one plug was missing completely! 7 Mike had just been in for a 40 hour check.

The last flight of the day consisted of work on the station Beacon. No night flying so that the troops will be able to go ashore fairly early. Tomorrow we're having a holiday. We're sure we all deserve it.

Weather: foggy, mild. Runway: 9. Hrs: 16.15.

May 7th

Sunday was a day of rest for all of us. Horrible weather - very fine drizzle and quite a Manchester-like fog.

May 8th

Some people practised ZB Beacon approaches on the field this morning, but the novelty of the day was the assisted take-off most of us tried at Sandford.

They now have a dummy wooden deck rigged up at this field to one side of runway 27, with Catapult gear & one arresting wire. We couldn't try the latter because the wind was blowing in the wrong direction. The assisted take-offs went quite well on the whole, though certain types described somewhat odd-shaped paths through the air. The general impression seems to be that you don't really know what's happening until you're about twenty or thirty feet in the air. Some individuals discovered that it is important to use the headrest!

Weather: fine, mild. Runways: 27, 21. Hrs: 24.20

May 9th

Time this morning to put in our last lot of ADDL's before the trip to Norfolk & the FULL! Four types flew down to Bar Harbour led by S/Lt Ferguson & later Lt Edwards followed with four more. The C.O. with S/Lt's Maitland, McLisky and Glading went to Sandford to try assisted take-offs. These were successful, though McLisky took a length of cable along with him during his attempt. This somehow became attached to his tailwheel but dropped before he had actually left the perimeter of the field. S/Lt Mattholie & the C.O. led flights on patrol formation exercises and were bounced for practice - that was in the afternoon.

More night flying this evening. S/Lt Hall practiced landings & take-offs successfully and safely while S/Lt Mattholie led S/Lt's Blaikie & Crosland very much astray! In fact they got completely lost and it wasn't till quite late that the Squadron learnt that all three had landed at the airfield at Bangor! They had some difficulty in convincing Stewards at the Officer's Mess there that they were actually Officers. Matt was wearing his patchy flying suit & the very clean scarf, while James had on S/Lt Brown's leather jacket & was otherwise equipped with his usual bicycling rig. No wonder, therefore. S/Lt Crosland we believe was the only orthodox member of the trio. However they did achieve great things in having landed without a Batsman at night.

May 10th

S/Lt Mattholie & his party flew to Bar Harbour very early thinking that we would be there. We weren't & they came back to Brunswick. The morning was occupied with patrol formations, attacks & even some low flying by S/Lt Bastion.

About 4.30 half of those going down to Norfolk by train left for Boston, the rest leaving two or three hours later. The effects of this extra time in Boston were only too obvious when the second crowd arrived! All of nine of us with S/Lt & Mrs. Humphries included, left Boston for New York about 12.30. On this part of the trip we were fortunate in having Pullman reservations.

May 11th

Back at Brunswick, the "Pilots" as opposed to the "Officers" - who had gone down by train - made preparations for the flight to Norfolk. Any number of maps were fetched from Operations, five separate ones being required for each member. Even the plotting board was used by the more enthusiastic types to work out courses, E.T.A.'s and the like.

The Squadron was all ready to go about 2.15, or thereabouts. At the last moment the C.O. discovered that his suitcase wouldn't fit in the back of 7 Able. Already two flights were waiting at the intersection to take-off! Great flap. George, our Liaison Officer, dashed about in all directions. The Widgeon, he discovered, was full & couldn't take the case. George became more worried & fussed than ever. Finally it was discovered that the suitcase could be fixed in the Corsair out of range of the controls. George was relieved & the Squadron took off & set course for Norfolk.

Meanwhile the train party, more or less sober by this time, left New York at 6.30 & rolled South at a steady 30 odd miles an hour. They reached Cape Charles about 3.15 and boarded a ferry for Norfolk. This was a pleasant change after the train since it was a fine day but it was most discouraging to see the Squadron Pilots flying overhead after we'd been at sea for an hour! We had to criticize their formation which was certainly most unorthodox & very loose. Perhaps one feels like that after 3 hours in a Corsair! The Officers finally met the Pilots again about 7.30 that evening at the barracks at Breezy Point, USNAS Norfolk, Va.

May 12th

There was practically no wind at all this morning and we took the opportunity to fly up to Philadelphia to the Brewster plant there and have the modifications carried out on the Corsair's undercarriage oleos. Eleven cabs actually went up and the remaining Pilots remained behind & spent the day swimming & sweating at the Air Station. They found that the O Club at the Naval Operating Base was particularly nice.

The Squadron distinguished itself at the Brewster's Field by landing downwind to a man! S/Lt Ralston turned up late & decided to land in the usual way. Fortunately the wind was extremely slight in any case. Members of the Squadron went over the factory and saw many beautiful engines, and things. They spent the night in Doylestown, transport being organised for them. Something might be said of Brewster's experimental fighter-bomber-reconnaissance-etc. This has been described as an "armour-plated bathtub with wings". It was simply gigantic. Before they left for Doylestown everyone did an ADDL or two.

May 13th

The types left Doylestown about 8.30 and were back at Norfolk at 10.30 or 11.00

Prospects for landing-on weren't at all rosy, but we had various lectures and instructions on what to do and what not to do. Finally we were told to rush off to lunch & return as soon as possible. Back at the Hangar again, there were more delays but finally the first four victims took off. The C.O. led Lt Edwards, S/Lt Brown and S/Lt Maitland out to Chesapeake Bay to find the USS CHARGER. The C.O. sighted the wrong Carrier first but soon discovered his mistake and before very long all four Corsairs were circling a ship marked "30" in big numbers on the Flight Deck. It looked extremely small and Lt. Commander Jackie Whelpley R.N. looked smaller still. The C.O. was the first to land-on: "no trouble at all" apparently & after repeating this performance twice he remained circling to watch the other three. S/Lt Brown was doing well & had landed on twice up to that time. S/Lt Maitland had made one successful landing and one extremely twitchy take-off during which he almost hit the Bridge. He then decided to make an attempt at writing-off the forward Port gun position. Fortunately he failed. The Soldier meanwhile hadn't been on the deck. At last he

did get down but caught his hook on the rounddown, broke it off and rolled over all the wires into the barrier. There he went up on his nose & almost on to his back. Fortunately he didn't go right over but remained in his precarious position, apologising profusely to all spectators. The C.O., Brown & Maitland waited patiently(?) while the wreck was removed below & then waited patiently again while the CHARGER steamed downwind for a further fifteen minutes. All three completed their four landings safely & returned home - the C.O. remained on the deck after his fourth effort. Brown & Maitland on their way back saw Lt Dubber & S/Lt's McLisky, Glading & Hewetson heading for the ship and quietly wished them luck. The first party had been in the air for almost 2½ hours by the time they'd landed at East Field. Dubber's crowd all qualified except for S/Lt Hewetson, for whom the barrier held a peculiar attraction. He had done one landing successfully but, on the second attempt, he floated over the wires & finished up on his nose in the barrier. This flight were also more than 2 hours doing their four landings-on.

By this time it was getting late & the light was becoming poor. Play stopped for the day.

May 14th There wasn't much wind this morning but sufficient it seems for Corsairs to land on the CHARGER. S/Lt Ferguson led a flight of four a/c - S/Lt's Hartshorn, Ralston, and Crosland were the Pilots. S/Lt Crosland managed the highest score - 3 successful landings - before Ferguson hit the barrier and they wouldn't let the types do any more after that. In fact, the CHARGER's Hangar was completely full of prangs - not all Corsairs, we're glad to say - and Hartshorn(one landing), Ralston(two) and Crosland(3) flew back to East Field.

The USS CHARGER went into dock the rest of the day and unloaded her dead & injured aircraft. Those who had qualified yesterday waited in vain all day for transport by air out of USNAS Norfolk. In the end, S/Lt Maitland got a ride in a Cessna with the President's son, Franklin Jr, who slept all the way to Washington.

May 15th Lt Dubber, S/Lt Brown & S/Lt Glading left early in a Marauder for Washington. It is believed they were all squashed into the tail turret when the 'g'during take-off is very noticeable. S/Lt McLisky followed hard after in a DC-3 bound for Atlantic City. From there he flew to Washington and at Patuxent Airport had the dubious pleasure of a back seat ride in a Firefly for 1 hour & 40 minutes!

Meanwhile at Norfolk, there was no wind for landings-on and a number of types flew to Monogram Field to ADDL. The C.O. was batting. Returning in the afternoon with only a small quantity of fuel, S/Lt Wood "just turned right by the river", as advised by the Soldier, lost his way & landed wheels up in a swamp before running out of petrol! He waded in to dry, firm ground & went to the nearest house to telephone Norfolk. He was ordered to remain in the aircraft till help came. Meanwhile the local Mayor, police and a doctor had turned up on the scene. So there Don Wood sat in his Corsair in the middle of the swamp till 4 o'clock in the morning. The mosquitoes buzzed and bit pleasantly & Don probably wondered what he was going to say!

May 16th Nothing very much happened all day at USNAS Norfolk, and members of the Squadron amused themselves in thier own ways - quite a lot of swimming was done amongst other things! In the late afternoon however, there was an urgent call for some types to land-on the CHARGER. S/Lt Morten therefore flew out with S/Lt's Bastion, Hewetson and Connolly following. Morten circled gaily several times before he began his deck landings in earnest. He soon had four to his credit. Hewetson, too, soon\*qualified - he only had two landings to do. Bastion seemed to prefer flying & only succeeded in getting down once, and even that was intended as a wave-off. Connolly managed two landings before it became too dark and the aircraft returned to East Field. Two members forgot to lock their tailwheels, but fortunately nothing happened.

rection:S/Lt  
wetson only  
naged one more  
nding, making  
ree in all!

Meanwhile, S/Lt Maitland had returned to Brunswick to find everything dead. The troops were all back from their weekend but no Officers.

May 17th This evening, after a day of inactivity, S/Lt's Crosland, Connolly, Bastion and Hartshorn flew out to the USS KASSUN BAY(there seems to be a great deal of controversy as to how this is spelt, CASSON, KAASUN, KASSOMA,etc. have all been suggested!)

Unfortunately, when they reached the ship, there wasn't sufficient wind and they had to return. Bastion had engine trouble on the way & Connolly remained behind with him. The other two went ahead. Terrible to relate, S/Lt Connolly forgot his wheels & the inevitable happened - BLACK!! S/Lt Morten flew back in the morning in a TBF to Quantum.

At Brunswick, Lt Dubber and S/Lt's Brown & Glading returned about 8.30 and began to organise things. S/Lt Maitland tried out his cab 7 Baker, which has been unserviceable for weeks. It sounded better than usual. A beat-up of Army gun posts near Portland is being organised in conjunction with 732 Squadron.

May 18th

Today S/Lt Mattholie and two others, Woodward and Humphries qualified for their deck landings on the USS KASSUN BAY. S/Lt Harrison, who went with them, tried valiantly but failed to make contact with the deck. S/Lt's Boynes, Ralston, Wood and Hall followed them out. Hall was forced to return after taking many wave-offs because of oil on his windscreen. Wood, alone, completed four landings & Ralston qualified with two (he had two to his credit already - May 14th). S/Lt Boynes landed successfully twice: on his third attempt he did a perfectly good touch-down, but suddenly pushed the stick hard forward, missing all the wires and ending up in the barrier on his back. This was the worst prang of the lot, but fortunately he got Wood, Ralston & away with it.

S/Lt's Humphries  
Woodward left  
Norfolk by Ferry  
(or train?)

At Brunswick, the great event was a coordinated dive bombing (by us!) attack & low level strafing (by 732). This went very well & everyone came out of their dives soon enough! Our timing wasn't good though, for 732 were just passing low over the target as we released our imaginary bombs. After the dive, we joined up and kept low, trying to come in just before or after 732. Most of the time both Squadrons seemed to converge over the target & a wild mêlée ensued - THE FULL TWITCH! After lunch S/Lt's Brown & Maitland flew a cross country trip to Brainard Field, Hartford and back. Lt Dubber went to Augusta on business.

S/Lt's Morten and McLisky are now back at Brunswick & there are sufficient members here to make it worthwhile doing some night flying. In the evening two sections of two aircraft took off, one led by S/Lt Maitland, the other by S/Lt McLisky. It was dusk then. McLisky hurriedly did a circuit: Brunswick, Rockland, Augusta & home & switched the lead to Morten, who went round again quickly & was back at Brunswick before it was really dark. Lt Dubber sent him round again & even then his section were back before Maitland and Brown had completed their two circuits! They have learnt the secret of corner cutting.

May 19th

In Norfolk the day was spent in ADDLing at Monogram with LCDR Whelpley & S/Lt McQueen bathing and swimming in the Officer's Pool, N.O.B.

Up North in Maine, S/Lt's Brown, Glading, Maitland, McLisky and Morten spent an hour and a half practising section attacks & later in the morning retired to the new Skeet Range with Lt Dubber, where the birds had a very easy time. At 15.30 pm a call came through from Norfolk for some more cabs! Brown, Maitland, McLisky and Morten were selected to fly down. Brown was replaced by Glading at the last moment and after maps had been selected & courses worked out, Maitland, McLisky & Glading took off together & joined up. Morten was delayed but was airborne 15 minutes later. Nothing extraordinary occurred during the trip and all four Corsairs were safely at East Field, Norfolk by 1945.

Only one further Corsair was actually needed so that tomorrow McLisky & Morten will fly back with Mattholie, who has business to attend to in New York.

May 20th

More ADDLing and swimming today. Weather not at all good & McLisky, Morten and Mattholie were obliged to wait till lunchtime for their return trip. Even then they were only cleared as far as Anacostia. Eventually, however, McLisky & Morten reached Brunswick & Mattholie landed safely at Floyd Bennett, N.Y. S/Lt's Glading and Maitland remained at Norfolk, waiting in vain for a ride up North.

At Brunswick, Dubber & Brown alone hold the fort. Brown had two Test Flights during the day. S/Lt Humphries returned from Norfolk & proceeded to overturn the Jeep on the runway! Wood, Woodward and Ralston came with him.

May 21st

Glading and Maitland got an early morning hop to Washington National Airport in a DC-3, and another from there to Floyd Bennett where they saw Matt's Corsair parked peacefully. The types at Norfolk did nothing all day. The C.O. flew up to Brunswick where the only aerial activity had been attacks & aerobatics by S/Lt's Brown and Humphries.

May 22nd

At Norfolk ADDL's - Monogram Field. S/Lt's Hall, Harrison and Boynes left Norfolk by ferry. At Brunswick Brown went up to see what the weather was like.

Correction

Hartshorn & Cros

That was all!

and left by

May 23rd The last five members of the Squadron left Norfolk. S/Lt Ferguson led ferry. Bastion S/Lt's Blaikie, Hewetson, Connolly, and Reeve as far as Anacostia, They couldn't get clearance any further. The flight performed admirably over the White House in a nice close Vic formation - the one patch of land in the U.S. over which no one is allowed to fly! The approach at Anacostia was in the nature of a ski run but every-one made it. The first thing to greet Ferguson on landing was a report of his crime. He pleaded ignorance.

Caspar John RN.

Boynes was flown

to Patuxent Air

port.

Meanwhile at Brunswick the C.O. decided to fly down to Norfolk and discover what was happening. He took the Soldier & Griffin with him. They reached Norfolk safely but couldn't get clearance out again because of weather conditions.

Air firing has begun again at Brunswick & Brown is being given a chance to tow McLisky as well, Unfortunately the weather got worse and worse and anyway Humphries kept shooting the sleeve off! In the afternoon therefore, Brown, Humphries, Morten and McLisky resorted to patrol formation and ... Morten pranged on landing! The FULL NOSE-OVER in one of the very very new kites. He had the angle of the brakes badly adjusted & in applying full rudder he was also locking the opposite brake!

May 24th

The C.O. and Lt Edwards left Norfolk for Anacostia this morning but could move no further. S/Lt Ferguson and the four others are still there.

At Brunswick aerial activity increases: in the morning Lt Dubber led a patrol formation of six aircraft, sections of two of these taking turns at bouncing the other four. A lowflying flight during which dummy ground attacks & low crossunders were practised, was cut short when S/Lt Humphries reported that he'd hit a pine tree. His Starboard wingtip & part of the aileron was damaged & he climbed up and flew back with S/Lt Brown standing close by. S/Lt Mattholie, who was leading, returned with S/Lt Maitland a little later. Humphries did a good safe landing at Brunswick. We have a nice picture of the wing for the Line Book & we still have S/Lt Humphries Lucky man.

After lunch the weather was just good enough for air firing & S/Lt Morten was, as usual, towing. Lt Dubber flew to Squantum.  
Hours for the day: 20.55.

May 25th

News for today is confined to Brunswick. We don't know what the types at Anacostia are doing.

Air firing all day with S/Lt's Humphries, Maitland, Brown and of course Morten doing their share of towing. S/Lt Mattholie too! We combined with 732 Squadron most of the day and by pooling our resources put in the respectable total of 22.20 hours. Tow lines are becoming scarce.  
Hours: 22.20. (S/Lt's Crosland & Hartshorn arrived back - someone to tow!)

May 26th

More air firing today, Morten doing his usual two tow trips. S/Lt Mattholie seems to be a regular member of the tow-drogue Club nowadays. In the late afternoon six Corsairs from Anacostia turned up with the C.O. leading. The Squadron is at last complete except for S/Lt Connolly who is now in Hospital in Washington with a swollen eye. Something's eaten him. S/Lt Griffin is reported to be still in Norfolk!  
Hours: 38.40.

We seem to be in a position to lend kites & today 732 Squadron had the use of 7 Roger. High speed drogues seem to be worse than useless, noones succeeded in getting one off the deck intact as yet.

May 27th

At 0800 LCDR Bigg-Wither delivered a gigantic bottle to the Squadron for the

show at Norfolk, for bad air discipline & for general behaviour. We were also restricted to the Air Station & from the Officer's Wine Mess.

Lt Dubber then took up a flight of eight cabs. Flying on this hop was apparently far below standard. The C.O. then took up the remaining four Pilots for formation. To begin with, this was terrible S/Lt Maitland in particular, being quite unable to do a normal 180 turn. However the formation gradually improved & some of the close work was quite classy. At least the C.O. was not displeased afterwards in the Pilot's Room.

The weather made air firing impossible though three types did have a swack. Late in the afternoon S/Lt Mattholie led five other members on a formation flight. A sharp thunderstorm engulfed the field while this party were up & we imagined they have landed somewhere else. The Tower, as usual, sending frantic 'recall' messages. However they all turned up while it was still raining and landed proudly in a spray of water. The C.O. flew to Boston. Hours: 26.50.

May 28th

There was an air firing all morning in warm sunshine. After lunch, those who hadn't qualified at Norfolk flew down to Bar Harbour to ADDL. We thought we'd be able to say that they'd done so, long and earnestly, but S/Lt Hardy, 732 Squadron, wouldn't allow it. While Bastion, Hewetson and Blaikie were ADDLING, he remarked, "You people land pretty fast. We come in much slower than that!"

On his first approach, he came round the final turn with nose right up and very little engine on and he was high. He therefore took practically all throttle off and dropped the last thirty feet like a brick. S/Lt Mattholie & Lt Dubber with all spectators were 50 to 100 yards away by the time he hit the deck. His left wing hit first and crumpled and at the same time the Port wheel was ripped off. By this time the prop blades were wrapped round the engine cowling, but were still churning valiantly! Hardie was practically unhurt. Just a bruise or two. He got out like a flash of lightning when Lt Dubber shouted that gas\* was pouring out of the engine. Uneventful cross country night flying this evening - no prangs, no nothin'. Hours: 34.40.

N.B. Petrol!

May 29th

Never did we expect to hear 1841 Squadrons engines turning over at 0600 at Brunswick! But it came to pass. Types report that it's really quite nice & that one does appreciate breakfast afterwards. Each person put in about half-an-hour ADDLING before we stopped for breakfast. The rest of the morning was spent in formation flying, air tests, flights to Bar Harbour and so on. After lunch there was a little air firing. Before dusk, those who had never done emergency approaches in the Corsair had 30 minutes of it and when it was really dark. Bastion, Hewetson & Glading went night flying. Humphries

Hours: 36.10

May 30th

The Squadron packs! Scene of tremendous activity & chaos at the Hangar. In the evening we borrowed some cabs from 732 & ADDLED indifferently. Finally had to stop because of bad light. Good work was done during the day by the troops & P.O.s and by the evening practically everything was packed away.

We are now allowed ashore & to partake of the bottle!

May 31st

There were one or two test flights this morning and all packing was completed. Minor thunderstorm arrived about midday. In the afternoon we had the Squadron photograph, two shots of the entire crowd being taken with one of the Officers & one of the C.O. and P.O.'s. It was decided that the troops and Officers leaving by train should go tomorrow.

Jun 1st

The weather wasn't so good this morning and the C.O. decided he'd wait another day before making the trip down to Norfolk. The train party and all the troops left about 8.30. S/Lt Glading has the thankless task of looking after them all. 1842 Squadron left about lunchtime for Norfolk but didn't get any further than New York that day. They flew low in formation over the Administrative building and pictures were taken; we will be doing the same thing when we leave.



There was a fight in the Officer's Club this evening, caused entirely by one American Officer. We are glad to say that no one in the Squadron was involved at all!

June 2nd

It was a beautiful day and we were all up in the Hangar at 8.30. Preparations were made for the flight though we aren't leaving until just after lunch. Lt Dubber had difficulty starting up & Jack Kennedy went to his assistance. The latter shook hands with each Pilot before they taxied out. Pete King and the Soldier were both present to say cheerio and wish us luck.

Just before taking off, the C.O. thanked Lt Sands for all his help on behalf of the Squadron. Sands was up in the Tower. "Goodby Biggy & good luck!" were his farewell words.

We joined up in formation II and flew over the field at 1500', then turned 180° & came back in a close Vic formation at 200'. This was for the benefit of the Station Photographer who was shooting us from the Ad Building. Unfortunately just after take-off, S/Lt Blaikie reported something "bur-r-rning" in his cockpit and returned to the field. So we were one short. His trouble turned out to be the battery & he followed us down later by himself.

The C.O. set course for Boston down the coast and we flew formations I, II and "T" on the way, keeping quite close the whole time. It was extremely hot. From Boston we turned inland a little & climbed up above Cumulus clouds to 11,000'. South of New York we ran into an extensive thunderstorm but managed to fly round it & then let down to 1000' where we came out in heavy rain. By the time we reached Atlantic City this had stopped but the weather still looked threatening.

We reached East Field, Norfolk about 4.30 and broke up. The C.O. was told to follow some Helldivers in. Just before he turned into the final approach, the Tower called up and told him to make an unusually long approach to avoid a Hellcat coming in in front of him for an emergency landing. The C.O. complied but just as he was touching down, another voice from the Tower stated clearly that all F4U's were making too long an approach & that they were cutting out Helldivers doing the correct thing. This was the limit after we'd done our utmost to please them. To crown everything, Bastion did a heavy landing, burst his tyres, went up on his prop and back again. Later S/Lt Mattholie coming in behind S/Lt Morten, who started to swerve, applied too much brake & he too nosed over! More Blacks! \*We learnt the 1842 Squadron had landed on that day without an accident or mishap of any sort.

Correction:  
This wasn't discovered till June 4th.

A bus was waiting to take us to Portsmouth Docks where we were to go aboard HMS SMITER, a new Escort Carrier. The troops were already aboard. S/Lt Glading's description of conditions on the ship weren't at all encouraging! There certainly wasn't much cabin space with ourselves & a TBF Squadron, 856, too. Not to speak of the Ship's Company. Below decks it was extremely hot. An enormous American Carrier not far away, reported to be the SHANGRI-LA, made us feel & look very insignificant. Hours:

June 3rd

We left the docks at 6.00 am though none of us were there to witness it, and by 9.00 am were out in Chesapeake Bay ready for test firing of guns. It was much cooler than yesterday and very pleasant on the Flight Deck. The Ship's Company played hockey in the late afternoon. Test fired guns all day. Quite a racket. At night we lay at anchor.

June 4th

All firing was completed early & by 1600 we were docked at the Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, ready to take the aircraft aboard. Officers were allowed ashore. It was comparatively cold on deck this morning, even when we had docked.

June 5th

1841 Officers are being given certain duties during the trip, Assistant Officer of the Watch & Squadron Duty Officer. The first of these duties began this morning. The aircraft were brought on board today: TBF's first, then our Corsairs, and finally some brand new ones, 54 in all. No more room for deck hockey. 7 Able & 7 Baker are our only aircraft in the Hangar! We left N.O.B. Norfolk about 1600 for New York. Slight swell & the SMITER pitched moderately.

June 6th **INVASION OF FRANCE** The news came over the ship's loudspeakers quite early. By 11.00 am land was plainly visible, Coney Island tower & even some of the Manhattan skyscrapers through a morning haze. The GRISHOLM overtook us to Starboard. We docked at 35th Street Pier, South Brooklyn, about lunchtime. Shore leave was granted from 1400 til 0800 tomorrow. Everyone immediately dashed off!

June 7th Today at 1000 we were again granted shore leave till midnight. Again the general exodus! 47 boy refugees aboard now and not nearly enough room for them.

June 8th We left the docks at 9.30, HMS ARBITER following close astern. We were soon through the narrows and Liberty & the skyline began to fade. By the evening the convoy of 30 odd ships & the escort of Destroyers had joined up & we were off.

#### THE VOYAGE

June 9th On the whole, this was a sort of rest cure. Weather was excellent the whole time except during the last few days when we were off the West Coast of Ireland.  
to  
June 19th We went a long way South en route, to within 80 odd miles of the Azores. There was a certain amount of excitement one day with a Sub reported near, but apart from a great deal of natter over the radio & letting go a few "hedgehogs" the Yank escorts didn't do much. Highlights of the trip were S/Lt Griffin's lecture on the FAA to the boy passengers - he's reported to have borrowed a few books on the subject from one of them before holding forth - Blaikie's birthday party, and the enormous number of head-down hours achieved by certain Officers who seldom saw the light of day. Everyone took turns at Assistant O.O.W. & assumed a nautical attitude on the Bridge with or without telescope. We were all rather pleased to see land, but wished it hadn't to be Liverpool!

June 20th We were in sight of land moderately early in the morning & were actually docked at 1245. Liverpool looked very dirty. The K.G.V was in dock near us for repairs. The stevedores & the RAF got rid of a certain number of the Corsairs but stopped work at about 5.30 pm leaving all our kites & the TBF's on board. Some types went ashore - & home if they were near enough!

Signals flashing to & fro. First we're going on leave, next we're going to Ayr to pick up new Corsair II's & now we're going to do more Carrier landings on the FORMIDABLE!

The Custom's Officers came aboard this morning & types got away with murder. Very satisfactory!

June 21st The TBF's were removed today from the SMITER & six Corsairs went with them to the RAF Station, SPEKE. These were the ones which were badly u/s & were to be repaired there by P.O. Wright & a dozen ratings. The remainder of the troops worked on the twelve Corsairs, which were to fly off to Ayr. There was shore leave for some of the luckier types and more sleep for the others. It doesn't look as if we're going to get any leave now & the FORMIDABLE buzz seems to be true!

June 22nd The troops continued working on the 12 Corsairs this morning. A certain number of troops with P.O. Callow in charge remained aboard to see to the starting of the cabs & any servicing, while the rest went ashore for the trip by rail to Ayr. S/Lt Hartshorn, Blaikie, Bastion & Griffin also went by rail. While Reeve, Harrison, Hall, Hewetson, Ferguson and Boynes are at SPIKE & will fly up to Ayr & there today

The SMITER put to sea after lunch. It was quite a respectable day fortunately 856 Squadron, whose TBF's had been on board, flew past us fairly low on their way to MACHRIHANISH. We were to take off in three flights of four, Lt Dubber leading the first, S/Lt Mattholie the second & the C.O. the third. Everyone took off safely & Dubber's flight arrived at Ayr at the same moment that the crowd from SPEKE were putting up a black by landing at Prestwick, next door! Everyone landed safely eventually, & Mattholie & the C.O. followed. The troops & Officers coming by train are due in about 0300 tomorrow morning.

June 23rd We now know for certain that we're not going on leave and instead we're to fly like mad and land on the FORMIDABLE on Sunday or Monday. CDR Bramwell, Commander Flying from the FORMIDABLE, came to Ayr to let us into the secret as much as possib-

le. There's an operation coming & it's advisable to take all the comforts one has!  
A rush job & we have to work hard to be in shape.

That evening we all went up for ½ hours jaunt to get used to the Corsair again  
~~Corsairs were seen in various odd altitudes round the field & members who came down~~  
for the beat-up, received the Harry Bottle from the C.O.

Tomorrow we start ADDLing about 06.00 which means getting up at 05.15, with no  
breakfast. We are hoping for some tea, though.

June 24th

The first detail were off on their ADDLing trip dead on 0600 and the inhabit-  
ants of Ayr didn't bless them for it! S/Lt Joyce, "Bats" from the FORMID is dealing  
with us. He's never ADDLed Corsairs before but has deck landed them. Everyone did  
four 15 or 20 minute periods of ADDL's during the day & the day was finished off  
with the types doing 30 minutes section formation. S/Lt Boynes managed to get lost  
but landed further down the coast, was given directions & returned safely.

June 25th

Three more periods of ADDL's each today - "never in the history of 1841 Squad-  
ron have so many ADDL's been done, in so short a time, by such a weary crowd of  
types". S/Lt Humphries had a nasty prang while coming in on one ADDL. He was too  
slow & the Port wing stalled about 15' from the ground with the usual result. Wing  
u/s, prop ditto & 7 Mike in general looking rather sorry for itself. Before flying  
stopped for the day, the Squadron ranged, took off, joined up, broke away & landed  
as they'll do on the FORMIDABLE tomorrow.

June 26th

We did some ADDL's in the morning and after lunch the C.O., S/Lt Mattholie &  
the ten Pilot's chosen to land-on, took off from Ayr for the FORMIDABLE in three  
flights of four. These consisted of: C.O., McLisky, Maitland, Hewetson; S/Lt's  
Mattholie, Glading, Hartshorn, Crosland; Morten, Woodward, Blaikie and Brown. They  
all managed to land safely & furthermore succeeded in doing three more take-offs,  
form-ups & landings without mishap.

June 27th

We spent the night anchored at Lamlash, Isle of Arran. The C.O. with six of  
the Squadron flew to Ayr to pick up the Corsair II's. Most of them landed with  
tailwheels unlocked & Woodward hit his wing gently on a "STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!" not-  
ice just off the runway. They picked up the II's & returned to the ship. S/Lt  
Mattholie & six other types flew an "attack" hop for a terrible length of time.  
They lost (Matt & Glading) the others & landed at Ayr before returning to the ship  
again.

June 28th

Lamlash was cold, grey & wet this morning & P.T. was cancelled. After lunch  
however, the weather cleared and the sun came out. S/Lt Terrill landed the Walrus  
alongside & she was made fast to the Quarterdeck. He'd come from Ayr with stores  
which was good, but unfortunately he returned with them later, no one having unload-  
ed the stuff! In the evening the Captain spoke in the Hangar to all hands. Appar-  
ently 70 odd men went adrift in Greenock! In the evening the Squadron worked out  
plans for the following days escort exercise with the Barra's.

June 29th

There was P.T. this morning & the eager types were all there. The P.T.I. stood  
high up in the superstructure of the Bridge & the Band played suitable music. Air-  
craft were ranged early & at 1030 we took off. Everyone had to weave violently to  
keep with the Barra's which were cruising at 120 knots but it didn't go too badly.  
Cloud unfortunately spoilt the whole exercise since we couldn't get at the target.  
We left the Barra's eventually & practised attacks before returning to the ship &  
landing on. We'd been in the air over 2½ hours but were forced to do this because  
the ship was trying out it's guns. Some more Pilots had landed on from Ayr while  
the escort crowd had been up - S/Lt's Wood, Connolly and Griffin. They continued  
with D.L.s during the afternoon. S/Lt Connolly in 7 George landed heavily, burst  
his Port tyre & ground down the rim of the wheel. He also caught his prop on one  
of the arrester wire stanchions. We anchored in Greenock for the night.

June 30th

Very bad weather this morning as we left Greenock, but it soon cleared up &  
about 1130 seven Corsairs took off with some Barracudas. We joined up, broke away  
& landed on safely. Admiral Lister congratulated the C.O., "A very commendable

performance". Is this still 1841 Squadron?? Guns were fired by the ship & 6 Corsairs strafed the ship as the Barra's practised bombing. Some sections attacked as well.

July 1st The ship anchored in Bangor Bay for the night with two U.S. Battleships and a Cruiser lying nearby. Visibility was very poor and it was cold and damp. Pilots were up in the Ready Room by 0800 to be briefed for the morning's flying. A combined attack by the Barracuda's & us was planned on a target towed by the FORMIDABLE Hellcats & Firefly's from the INDEFATIGABLE with their Barracuda's were to follow us on the same target. However the weather remained poor all morning. Very early in the afternoon, just after the troops had been secured, a pipe came through for a range of 12 Corsairs & 6 Barracuda's. Weather pretty poor though there was some sun & patches of blue sky. S/Lt Woodward in 7 Fox was our first casualty. This cab's engine was popping melodiously & losing 1000 revs on it's right magneto! At about 900 revs it cut out completely. The C.O. and S/Lt Blaikie were off in rapid succession but 7 Sugar refused to spread her wings & Morten was delayed a while. The remaining six took off successfully & in spite of very adverse weather conditions, nine Corsairs were soon joined up in formation II. We did get rather mixed up with the Hellcats from HMS INDEFATIGABLE at one point & the C.O. admits that he completely lost sight of the FORMIDABLE for a few moments! The formation never got above 500' & were often in cloud or as low as 200' and were recalled almost immediately. In fact the Barracuda's never took off & S/Lt's Glading & McLisky in the last two Corsairs were given a red light & never left the ship. S/Lt Crosland in 7 Peter had a nasty experience. While in formation, the wing-folding indicator on his Port wing suddenly flew up! It created sufficient drag to prevent him keeping formation when the C.O. turned to Starboard & he came very near to his opposite number, which in this case was the drink! All members landed on safely except Blaikie, who couldn't lower his hook. Needless to say, the ship had great difficulty in interpreting his radio conversation & at one point he asked whether he was to go to "Angels 1500" when instructed to use 1500 revs! The weather continued to close in & we caught occasional glimpses of him through the murk. It did clear eventually & he was sent off to Ayr where he landed safely. The hook was soon fixed & he returned later & landed safely.

We returned to Greenock in the late afternoon where S/Lt's Griffin and Ferguson came aboard with the troops. The stores followed & were all down in the Hangar by 0700. 7 George was sent up on deck but we didn't get rid of her & she was still there next morning.

July 2nd The ship sailed up to Largs in the morning & anchored there all day. Large numbers of the Scottish race came out in their rowing boats to have a look and were eventually chase off by one of the ship's boats. 7 George again came up on deck & a lighter came alongside to take her off. After a few hours, it was decided that she wouldn't fit & down she went again. Then there was the little civilian man from Greenock with his de-icing fluid who'd missed his lunch & brought 360 gallons of the stuff along in an L.C.T. - a rush job. No one seemed to want it & he walked about on deck frowning at everyone in general. Suddenly the Commander(F) discovered him & the stuff was unloaded. The little man dashed off to eat.

Five Corsairs were ranged to fly off to Ayr where the Corsair II's were to be picked up. However, after we left Largs, the weather was terrible & they were all struck down again.

At Ayr, Lt Dubber & S/Lt's Humphries, Harrison, Wood, Hall & Reeve ADDLed for short periods.

July 3rd Very low ceiling this morning & later in the morning it began to rain. Six Corsairs & some Barracuda's were ranged but the situation looked hopeless & the whole strike was called off. The Corsairs remained on deck in the rain for a long time before they were struck down. The ship proceeded North all day in filthy weather with one Destroyer escort. Instruction in R/T procedure was given in the afternoon to all Pilots & a lecture on the dinghy. Before supper, first aid outfit were issued & a further lecture given by the Surgeon Commander, where we learned all about Lord Lister & Louis Pasteur!

Big do on tomorrow & we're flying at 6.00 am, a/c being ranged at 4.45 or so. The Met Officer reports that fog's bound to continue, but then they're always wrong!

uly 4th

The Met Officer was correct after all! Everyone got up at a fiendish hour & the fog was thicker each time one ventured on deck. Later in the morning it began raining hard & continued till late in the afternoon. Corsairs & three Barra's had been range in the morning & were struck down after lunch. After they'd done their D.I.s, our troops were secured. The ship made several attempts to get into Scapa during the day & only succeeded at last about 2000. We were at anchor by 2130 near the FURIOUS with several other Cruisers scattered about - how's the ship rec:? 7 George was again on deck waiting for a lighter, which never turned up. That's our third attempt to get rid of the thing!

Lt Dubber's party left Ayr about 1945 to fly to Arbroath where they arrived  $\frac{3}{4}$  hrs later. They stayed overnight & met many old friends during this short stay.

uly 5th

The ship tried getting us away nice & early but the fog was thicker than ever nothing was done till after lunch. At first we thought we were going to be launched off since the Engineering types played about with the gear for some time before they were told to put it all away again - much to our relief. Nothing was done in the way of flying in the morning, but the troops, their baggage, the stores, five Officers and 7 George left the ship by lighter to go to Hatston. The Officers going ashore were S/Lt's Connolly, Crosland, Blaikie, Boynes & Griffin who, lucky fellow, is just off for two weeks leave.

The rest of the Officers started up engines about 1545, just missing tea, though we hear S/Lt McLisky just managed to make it & he reports that the Raspberry Jam was excellent. Somewhat rosey join up after take off, certain types not knowing exactly where they were meant to be. Hatston's runways seemed to be narrower than the CHARGE's deck & quite a number of the types ploughed craftily through the grass & daisies on landing. The crowd from the FORMIDABLE weren't all pancaked before the Arbroath party broke up over the field. Nice timing!

We had a midnight ramble in the Corsair before turning in. The C.O. led with Matt in charge of the second flight. This was escort practice, weaving and keeping a look-out in T formation. We pancaked about 2330! But for a few sober types, all the aircraft would probably have been pranged by the troops pushing them out of the Hangar. They'd just spent a very busy time at the Canteen & were very noisy as a result.

uly 6th

It was a beautiful day & the Squadron put in a fair amount of flying. The field is packed with aircraft - Barracuda's, Hellcats, Fireflies & our own modest contribution. Long lines of Barra's waiting to take off in the morning. One Hellcat over on it's back.

Our flying consisted of more formation, low flying and in the late afternoon some air firing on a drogue towed by a Master or Martinet.

uly 7th

For some reason or other, the weather decided to be fine for two days running. So today we managed to put in a goodly number of flying hours. The first hop was a patrol formation of eight Corsairs led by the C.O. They practised weaving in T formation as a possible method of escorting the Barracuda's. These eight were scheduled to go up almost directly afterwards on an actual strike with the Barracuda's. Seven of them eventually took off as escort, six others led by Lt Dubber were also present as an anti-flak party. The C.O.'s two flights joined up at fairly low altitude & kept low for some time. However they didn't find the "fishes" so they climbed up. Eventually one of the flight spotted the Barra's but by that time they were rather low on fuel, not having refuelled after the previous hop, and returned to base. Two further strikes took place during the rest of the day & the C.O. led the escorting Corsairs on both occasions. A low altitude join up at 130 knots was the full twitch, we found & bogging along slightly astern of the Barracuda's wasn't so good either. They kept up a good 140 knots, though, which was better than the 120 knots they'd produced before. The first of these strikes was meant to consist of both Barracuda wings, but only one turned up in the end & we were up for nearly two hours altogether. After the Barra's had gone in, our Corsairs went down to strafe & then got away over the

hills & down the valley's before joining up again. This procedure for join up & escort was repeated on the last strike except that we lost the Barra's in cloud & went off to do some section attacks before returning to base. S/Lt Humphries stalled a wing after a bounce on landing, did a rather majestic cartwheel before hitting the ground extremely hard. The undercarriage folded up & he was lucky to get away with a scratch on his knee. 7 Charlie is a complete write-off. A "Three" fortunately.

July 8th There was a fog this morning & consequently no flying. A lecture was given in the Station Cinema by LCDR (no name given) on what is likely to happen in the coming "Op". He dropped several hints but told us nothing definite. We - twelve of us - are to act as top cover, with the other six as the anti-flak party. The rest of the morning we checked the new cabs & after lunch miraculously, the sun came out & we went off on a strike escorting the Barracuda's. Two of the Corsairs who are to carry cameras on "D-Day", endeavoured to be over the target just as each wing of Barracuda attacked. After the break-up, it was difficult to follow the Corsairs while there were Hellcats all over the sky. However we do know that S/Lt McLisky & his wingman, S/Lt Crosland, dealt successfully with 14 odd Hellcats! ADDL's were planned for the late afternoon & after some delay, three Corsairs took off for Grimsetter, just over the hill. There was a 90° crosswind at this field & S/Lt McLisky hit a wingtip on landing, damaging the tip & the aileron - another Corsair III. The other two Corsair s returned & ADDL's were forgotten.

July 9th Today the Squadron was supposed to return to the ship and land on. However, the weather made this quite impossible. Fairly thick fog all day & the odd spot of rain. In the late afternoon it did clear slightly & S/Lt Brown was able to test fly 7 How, who has a Starboard Brewster wing on her. A large number of Compasses were swung during the day.

July 10th It looks as if today is going to be a repetition of yesterday! However after a series of delays, after lunch the C.O. took off, with five other Corsairs following. They sort of disappeared into the murk, but all landed safely. Jack Kennedy arrived by air just before the C.O. took off & there were great rejoicings. He hopes to come aboard the FORMIDABLE & we hope he does.

After a further delay, S/Lt Mattholie & C.O. (5 Pilots) took off, found the ship & landed on. Finally Lt Dubber & four Corsairs reached the ship and landed on safely. S/Lt Reeve caught No. 9 which made us all hold our breath for a moment & S/Lt Morten gambolled playfully!

S/Lt's Woodward, Harrison & Humphries came aboard by lighter with the rest of the troops. In the evening the Commander (F) briefed us for the strike to be held tomorrow. We wonder who will be the first Corsair off with full belly tank and magazines?

July 11th The weather was thoroughly bad this morning again. Low Ceiling, bad visibility & drizzle. The ship was out of the Flow & cruising about somewhere to the West of Hoy. After lunch it did clear slightly & 18 Barracuda's & 11 Corsairs were ranged. We were off about 1530, joining up about six miles ahead of the FORMIDABLE with the FURIOUS & INDEFATIGABLE to Port & Starboard. The rendezvous of both wings of Barra's the Hellcats, Fireflies & us took 1½ hrs in all! Which is fantastic. The Barra's seemed to do one too many orbits before setting course. All this was done below 300. Incidentally, we were flying with loaded guns, and belly tanks full. These seemed to work O.K., though S/Lt Blaikie's engine cut once while below 300'. He immediately switched to main & later found that his belly tank was working again. They drop easily enough, turning over & over with the petrol spraying out, vapour-like, at one end. They make a nice splash too! We dropped them over the target which was obscured by cloud & then went down to strafe. Add Hellcats, as usual, all over the place, mostly single.

Everyone landed safely & apparently quite well. S/Lt Humphries landed on for the first time since the CHARGER effort.

In the evening the ship returned to Scapa & tomorrow's programme is a repetition of today's. Let's hope the rendezvous is quicker tomorrow.

S/Lt Hewetson left Hatzston at 1100 & nothing has since been heard of him. He was to land on 7 Charlie which had been left behind. Radar never picked him up & the 3 Barracudas who took off with him all arrived safely.

July 12th

Barracuda's and Corsairs were ranged by 08.30. Several of the latter went u/s while starting or simply because they wouldn't start, and eventually all engines were cut and Pilots returned to AOR for rebriefing. It was then decided that the strike would take place directly after lunch. Before lunch the C.O. talked to all Officers of the Squadron & warned them about their respective jobs & responsibilities. S/Lt McLisky is now looking after the Hangar, S/Lt Wood is Assistant Radio Officer & S/Lt Harrison is Deck Officer. The rest remain practically as they were at Brunswick.

We were off at about 1330 with full belly tanks. The join up was rather slow & S/Lt Ferguson had a great time bogging about at zero feet inspecting each flight! He did eventually find his own. It seemed we circled for ages & ages before the Barra's set course & we followed in escort. The target was hidden by cloud & it's not believed that anyone actually found it, though the Squadron came down in a simulated strafing attack on something imaginary. We then joined up again flying in T formation, a three flights fairly close together & returned to the ship. The Squadron continued to patrol with the intention of using up the belly tanks and thus being able to land on without dropping them. However there was some sort of panic on the ship - an enemy Sub was reported near - & we were told to pancake immediately. The C.O. requested permission to fire off guns but was refused & we joined up, broke away & landed on. One Barracuda had already gone into the barrier after catching the 9th or 10th wire. He stopped with his prop just tickling the wire & then some enthusiast let down the barrier & completely smashed the prop. S/Lt Brown caught the 9th or 10th as well after adding too much throttle & being high for the cut. 7 George's prop was damaged, but not too badly apparently. S/Lt Humphries\* had some extremely bad luck: he did a beautiful approach & landing, bounced slightly by the first two wires & then for some unknown reason, sailed over all the others & went into the barrier. Suggestions put forward for this is that on the initial bounce, the hook was knocked up level with the tailwheel & remained there, failing to catch any of the other wires. The tailwheel itself couldn't have been more than 3" to 6" above the wires all the way.

There was another strike planned to go up directly afterwards but it didn't get off eventually till 1800. The join up was far quicker & the target was clearly visible for the Barra's & Corsairs. S/Lt Mattholie had a camera fitted to 7 Tare & we hope to see what sort of pictures he managed to get. Before landing on, we dropped tanks & fired guns. Everyone got on safely though S/Lt Morten ended up with his wheel against the ridge along the Port side of the deck! Lt Dubber's approach was pretty nerve-wracking & S/Lt Reeve, the last man on, came down very low several times before taking a wave-off. Altogether it was rather a black day for the ship. Three Barracuda's were pranged during the last range. One went into the barrier, the other two were damaged on deck before the take off. Rumour is no flying tomorrow.

The ship was pitching quite a lot during landing on, which may account for some of the "barriers" & "also rans".

S/Lt Hewetson is now officially reported 'missing', absolutely no trace of the Corsair has been found.

July 13th

We were in the Flow all day with the INDEFATIGABLE & FURIOUS at anchor quite near us. Troops worked all morning on the aircraft & after lunch had a Make & Mend. S/Lt Crosland went ashore to Hatston where he is to pick up a replacement for 7 Charlie & will probably land on tomorrow. Officers from the FURIOUS came aboard for supper & left about 2200. The Marine Band played during the meal for a short time.

July 14th

It was a pretty horrible morning and we left Scapa fairly early with HMS DUKE OF YORK, two County Class Cruisers and the other two Carriers following. Later during the day we also saw a Cruiser of the Penelope Class and one of the Southampton Class escorting us with quite a number of Destroyers as well.

At 1130 the Squadron was called to the Intelligence Room for briefing. LCDR Baker-Faulkner was there to tell us exactly what the operation was & where the target lay! As many of us had already guessed, it was the TIRPITZ which is anchored in Kaafjord off Alten Fiord, Northern Norway. LCDR Baker-Faulkner told us where the Barracuda's would be coming in so that we could make plans accordingly. We were the

in 7 King  
S/Lt McLisky  
landed over to  
Starboard &  
burst a tyre  
in 7 Zulu

S/Lt Crosland  
landed  
on about 1300 with a  
new Corsair, J.T.493  
from Hatston.

issued with a general map of the area, a mosaic of Alten Fiord & a large scale map of Kaafiord, on which we could copy in gun emplacements & the positions of different ships. By this time, lunch was ready & we came back later to pick up as much "gen" as possible from the maps, books, bumph & so on in the Intelligence Room. The troop worked on the cabs on deck till almost midnight & all those on deck, about 8 in all, were run up & tested before being lashed down & covered for the night.

July 15th

The handling party began ranging aircraft at 07.45 but they weren't ready to be started up by Pilots till nearly eleven. It took longer than had been expected to range 18 Corsairs & 21 Barra's & it certainly was a tight squeeze. We sat in the cockpits for about ½ hr before they decided to wait till after lunch. Even then they delayed it once more until about 1400! The idea is to simulate the real strike & landing on afterwards to see how the handling crews manage. In the process of this practice, two Corsairs & one Barracuda were damaged. 7 Sugar had her elevator badly cut about & will probably need an entire new tailplane & rudder trim as well. 7 How was responsible for this; the Pilot was signalled on by two of the Control Officers & smashed into 7 Sugar's tail. All engines were started & when reported O.K. by Pilots, the foremost Corsairs taxied on to the lift, cut their engines & were struck down.

About 1700 the Commander(0) gave us some gen about our position, routes to take radio aids, getting back & the purpose of the operation. He said that further operations would be necessary if the ship wasn't sunk or put badly out of action. At midnight the FORMIDABLE will be entering the Arctic Circle.

July 16th

Damp, cold weather all morning. By 1000 all the Corsairs were on deck ready to be run up. A certain amount of difficulty was experienced in the starting of engines. This was due both to cold and the dampness of the atmosphere. The C.O.'s Corsair, 7 Love, wouldn't be started at all & the maintenance crew changed the starter, which was found to be u/s, in an amazingly short space of time. The rest of the aircraft were run up successfully & were found to be O.K. S/Lt Blaikie however, downed 7 Pet because of a mag drop. A little later she was found to be serviceable, the 'drop' having disappeared completely.

From Noon till 1800 the Air Department was given a Make & Mend and all hands were told to get as much sleep as possible by the Captain. 1841 Squadron didn't have to be told!

At 2000 all aircraft were run up & tested & found to be serviceable. The weather was clear by this time & the sun was shining. The target area is supposed to be clear as well. Another two hours and the cabs were again run up and tested. Weather continued clear with the sun shining. About 2345, 1841 Squadron reported to AOR for final briefing. We learnt nothing new except that the weather's excellent all the way & over the target. The Captain shook handswith all members and wished us luck. At midnight, with the sun still shining, we all boarded our cabs & started up for the big "do", at last.

July 17th

The Squadron was arranged in three flights of four aircraft, & one of six, as follows:

TOP "MARLIN"				"BOTTOM"	
RED	YELLOW	BLUE			
{C.O.	- L {Morten	- S {Mattholie	- T	{Dubber	- R
{Blaikie	- P {Boynes	- J {Humphries	- K	{Reeve	- O
{Brown	- G {McLisky	- F {Woodward	- Z	{Glading	- Y
{Ferguson	- C {Connolly	- A {Crosland	- M	{Hartshorn	- H
				{Maitland	- B
				{Bastion	- X

Top Red Flight & Top Blue, led by the C.O. and S/Lt Morten, were to be top cover over the Barracuda's as soon as they began to climb for the target. During the trip to the Norwegian coast, a distance of about 60 to 80 miles, everyone kept below 200' & these two flights were to Port & slightly astern of the Barra's. S/Lt Mattholie & the rest of Top Blue Flight were slightly astern & to Starboard. All their aircraft were fitted with



8" lens camera in the after end of the fuselage & their job was to take pictures of the target as the two waves of Barra's were going in. Lt Dubber's "Bottom" Flight were to be the anti-flak crowd & were to attack specific targets with the Fireflies & Hellcats before the Barra's went in. During the trip to the target, "Bottom" Flight were to Starboard & just astern of the first wing of Barracuda's.

The first Corsair was airborne at 0040. The rendezvous took some time owing to the fact that the cabs had been ranged in any order & once in the air, Pilots had to sort themselves out. Difficulty was experienced again with belly tanks and some types found that the engine would cut unless 35" or more were used. Which made things more than a little difficult.

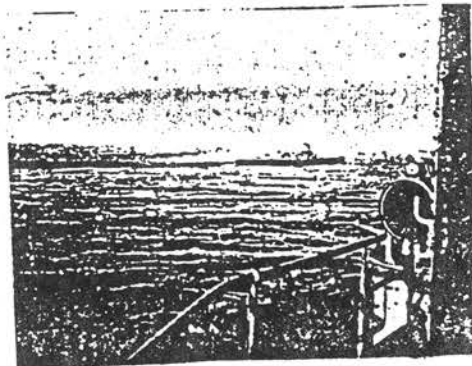
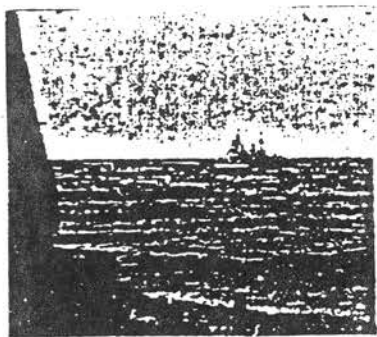
The trip to the coast was uneventful; we were over Silden & Loppen in just over half an hour. The country was extremely mountainous and wild far more so than we had expected from mosaics, maps and the likes. The tops of the mountains were snow covered & a little way inland Oksfiord Glacier could easily be seen. By that time the Barra's must have been about four or five thousand feet. Above them were "Top" Red, Yellow and Blue while Dubber & C.O., now divided into three sections of two, wove violently beneath the Barra's. At this height there were scattered clouds to Port but by the time the target was reached the sky was clear. They must have known we were coming because even before "lights out" LCDR Baker-Faulkner's signal for the ground straffers to go down - was given, black puff of AA fire appeared over the target, or a little to the South of it. Directly "lights out" was heard over the radio, Lt Dubber dropped his tank & started into his dive, followed closely by S/Lt Reeve and the other two sections. The whole of Kaafiord was covered with what looked like an intense ground fog. It was actually a heavy smoke screen laid most effectively by the enemy. It was quite impossible to see the TIRPITZ or the special straffing targets that had been selected. There were large numbers of light AA posts along the hills to the Southern end of the fiord, all of which began to fire. It was hard to see whether bursts of tracer were coming or going! The heaviest fire seemed to be coming from the far side of the fiord, from a sort of terrace of heavy & light AA posts. Lt Dubber was last seen going into the smoke in the direction of the target & was reported to have said that he was returning to base or making a forced landing, or both. At least he never returned to the ship & nothing more was seen of him. S/Lt's Glading & Hartshorn disappeared into the smoke firing at what looked like an intense patch of machine gun fire. They were extremely surprised when the TIRPITZ loomed up in front of them! S/Lt Reeve lost Lt Dubber during the attack & joined up afterwards on Glading & Hartshorn. S/Lt's Maitland & Bastion lost each other during the attack but the former took one machine gun post unexpectedly from the rear & had plenty of time to take careful aim & fire. Meanwhile the Barra's were coming in & up top, S/Lt Mattholie & his P.R.U.s(!) were steadily taking pictures of the smoke scene below, flak bursting all round them. The Barra's of course couldn't see their target either & had to drop blind. Some of them even returned with their bombs. This was a pity since there were three Destroyers lying comparatively peacefully in Lang Fiord. Fortunately one Barracuda did go for them & is reported to have got a direct hit on one with a 500 lb bomb. This was achieved by S/Lt McLachlan, whose cab was originally taken over by LCDR Baker-Faulkner because of damage to his own (Baker-Faulkner's) Barracuda. When everyone had taken off, McLachlan, instead of cutting the engine, revved up & took off suddenly while the LCDR(F) wasn't looking. He had no rear gunner & took off with no Mae West! Definitely a wild man! The C.O.'s top cover gradually let down after the Barra's had dropped & were returning, & passing over Lang Fiord, were shot at by the Destroyers. S/Lt Mattholie's flight let down fast after completing their photo taking runs & he & S/Lt Humphries shot up some AA posts in Lang Fiord, while S/Lt's Woodward & Crosland flew on to Silden where they joined in attacks on a solitary Trawler. This small ship must have been attacked by no less than 12 fighters, both Corsairs & Hellcats, and no wonder that it was silenced & left smoking! The strike returned in small batches of twos & threes, low over the water. Here & there a small formation of Barracuda's escorted by Corsairs or Hellcats flew in towards the Carriers. Within 3½ hrs of taking off all the Barracuda's & Corsairs had landed on. S/Lt Crosland in 7 Mike had some bad luck, just getting his Port wheel over the side. Mike's prop & Port wing were damaged in the process. S/Lt Humphries landed with 15 gallons of fuel left & S/Lt McLisky was lucky not going over the Starboard side

after a ropey landing. S/Lt Bastion was the first back & he was up 2½ hours.

Crews went to the Intelligence Room for interrogation. The Barra's aren't claiming any hits officially, but they hope they did get some. As many aircraft as possible were ranged for the second strike about three hours later & were started up. However, after five minutes or so, all engines were cut & the strike was off, due to fog over the target or on the way there. Breakfast after the first effort had been very welcome, particularly since it was bacon & eggs & now the greedier types returned to the Wardroom for a go at the sausages.

Nothing much happened during the rest of the day. There were four Pilots standing by in the Ready Room or in the cabs for A/S patrol, but at Noon this was abandoned & most of the types took the opportunity to get some sleep.

Total casualties for the day were Lt Dubber in 7 Roger missing, one Barra ditched but the crew safe, and one Hellcat over the side in the FURIOUS. This wasn't so bad but the raid doesn't seem to have been amazingly successful!

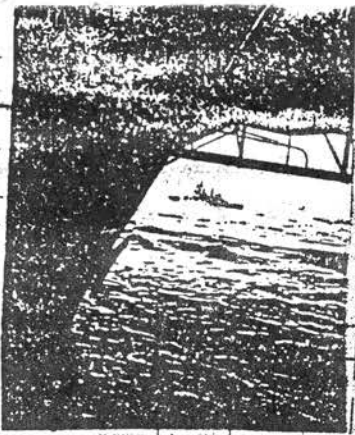


a large

July 18th

Just after midnight, number of Submarines were reported in the area and A/S patrols were begun. These were to consist of a Barracuda & a Corsair flying together and there were to be two of these sections up at a time. The C.O. and LCDR Baker-Faulkner were to be the first section & S/Lt Mattholie & LCDR Kingdom the second. During ranging or take off & join up, the sections were mixed up and eventually the C.O. was escorting LCDR Kingdom & Matt was with LCDR Baker-Faulkner. Kingdom & the C.O. returned safely to the ship and Kingdom landed on. Matt & Baker-Faulkner were asking for homing by now. Radio communication was very poor & the only way to get in contact with Matt was for the C.O. to relay messages from the ship to him. To make things more difficult for the F.D.O. S/Lt's Morten & Woodward with two more Barra's as well, were patrolling in the area of the ship. At one moment it was decided that S/Lt Brosn should be sent off & vectored on to S/Lt Mattholie, but this idea was given up almost immediately. By 0400 Matt & Baker-Faulkner were off the screen completely & it's thought that they split up & headed separately for the Norwegian coast. Mattholie had sufficient fuel to reach Sweden, or even Norway Russia, but Baker-Faulkner might not even have reached the coast of Norway.

The weather continued foggy all day but at 1600, in spite of this, S/Lt's Blaikie & Ferguson were sent up on patrol. They only completed 3 orbits before being recalled. They discovered before landing on that one must fly at more than 90 knots in order to release the belly tank. From the deck, a belly tank hitting the water is an impressive sight. They both landed on safely.



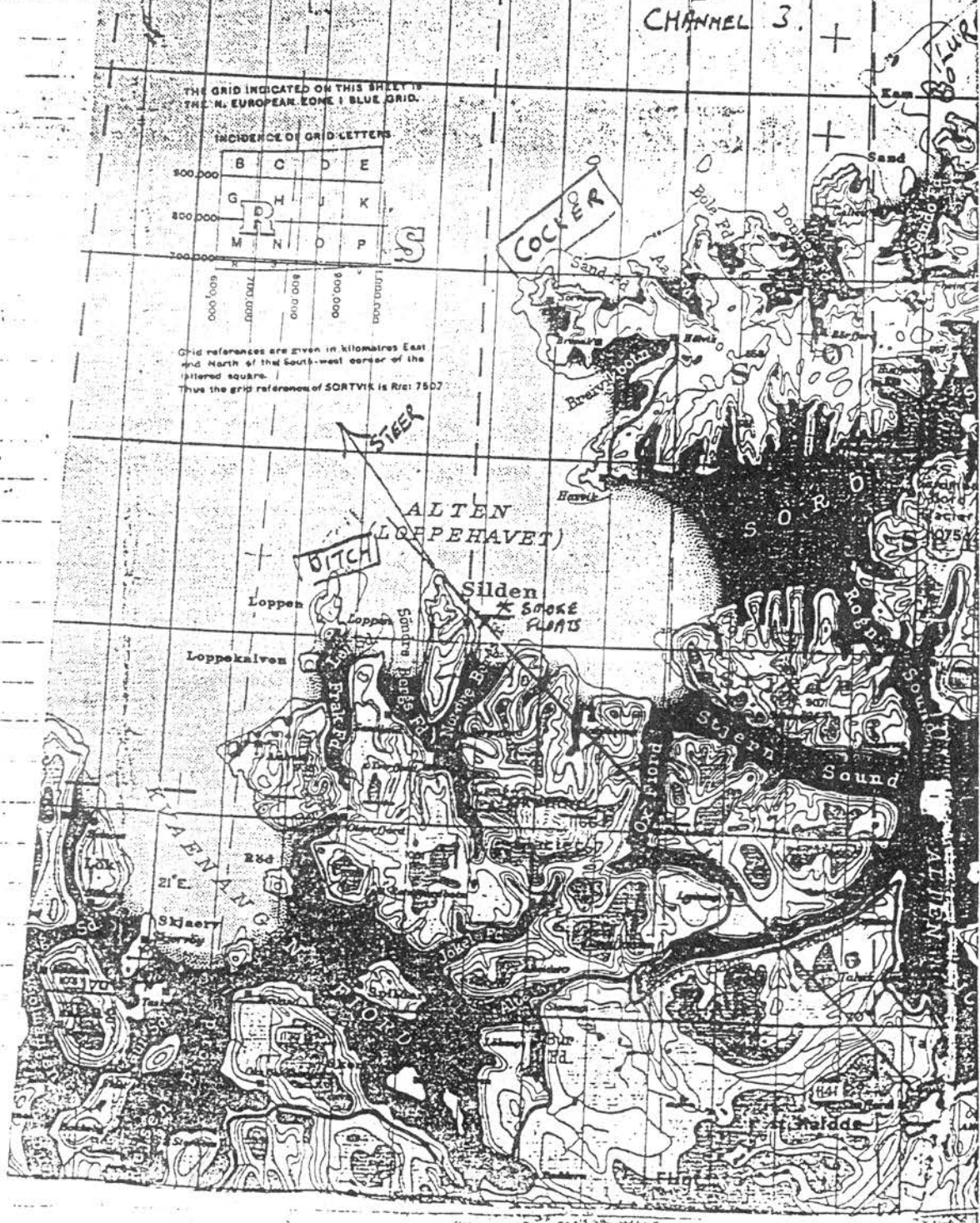
22°E  
 71°  
 23°E  
 BUTTON A - RESCUE  
 B - STRIKE  
 C - COMMENTARY  
 I.F.F. "ON" coming back  
 CHANNEL 3.

THE GRID INDICATED ON THIS SHEET IS THE N. EUROPEAN ZONE I BLUE GRID.

INCIDENCE OF GRID LETTERS



Grid references are given in kilometres East and North of the South-west corner of the lettered square.  
 Thus the grid reference of SORTVIK is R12 7507



## The Navy's Planes Fly Low on Way to Attack Tirpitz



### BROTHER MISSING, HE WORKED ON

During the recent series of Fleet Air Arm raids on the German battleship Tirpitz in Alten Fjord naval pilots had to face some of the most intense anti-aircraft fire they have met so far.

Numbers of airplanes, badly "shot up" and with their pilots wounded, got back to the carriers.

In one carrier, unknown to almost everyone on board, a family tragedy was being played out.

Surgeon-Lieutenant C. J. Thornberry, R.N.V.R., of Newry, Northern Ireland, was treating an injured flyer. In the words of the naval officer who told the story:

"He looked after him like a brother and there is no doubt helped to save his life."

"And all the time the doctor's own brother, a young Fleet Air Arm sub-lieutenant who had only just joined the ship, was missing from the same raid."

"Although we did not tell the doctor at the time I think he sensed it. He was so fond and so proud of the youngster."

Mrs. Thornberry, whose husband is a schoolmaster, said to-day it was a coincidence that her two sons were in the ship together.

"This was my younger son's first big raid. A friend of ours, a pilot, who visited us yesterday told us that he saw the whole operation and believed that my son may have been taken prisoner. He made a forced landing in Norway."

### TIRPITZ ATTACKED

Aircraft Swoop In Over Anchorage At Dawn

WARSHIP DAMAGED AGAIN

From OSSIAN GOULDING,

"Daily Telegraph" and "The Scotsman" Correspondent

Stockholm, Wednesday.—Germany's crack battleship Tirpitz suffered her third smashing attack of the war to-day. Carrier-based Barracudas of the Fleet Air Arm swooped in at dawn over the Kaafjorden anchorage in the North Norwegian base of Altenfjord, where the battered pride of Admiral Doenitz's Navy lay repairing the wounds sustained in previous raids.

Giving the news in a veiled form, the German News Agency to-day stated that seven British aircraft, operating from a carrier force, had been shot down over the naval base of Altenfjord.

No mention was made from the German side of the Tirpitz, but reports direct from Norway reveal that the battleship was in fact the target for this concentrated attack.

According to latest reliable reports, the Tirpitz was so far repaired that she was able to steam at reduced speed, with her main armament "partially effective." She had already been outside Altenfjord on trial cruises. She was capable of steaming as Germany, but would have been unable to fight an enemy warship of anything approaching her own size.

The extent of the damage done in this latest attack cannot yet be ascertained.

### 'Planes raid Tirpitz'

STOCKHOLM, Friday.—The 45,000-ton German battleship Tirpitz was attacked by about 70 Allied planes in the early morning of July 21, according to reports from Norway.

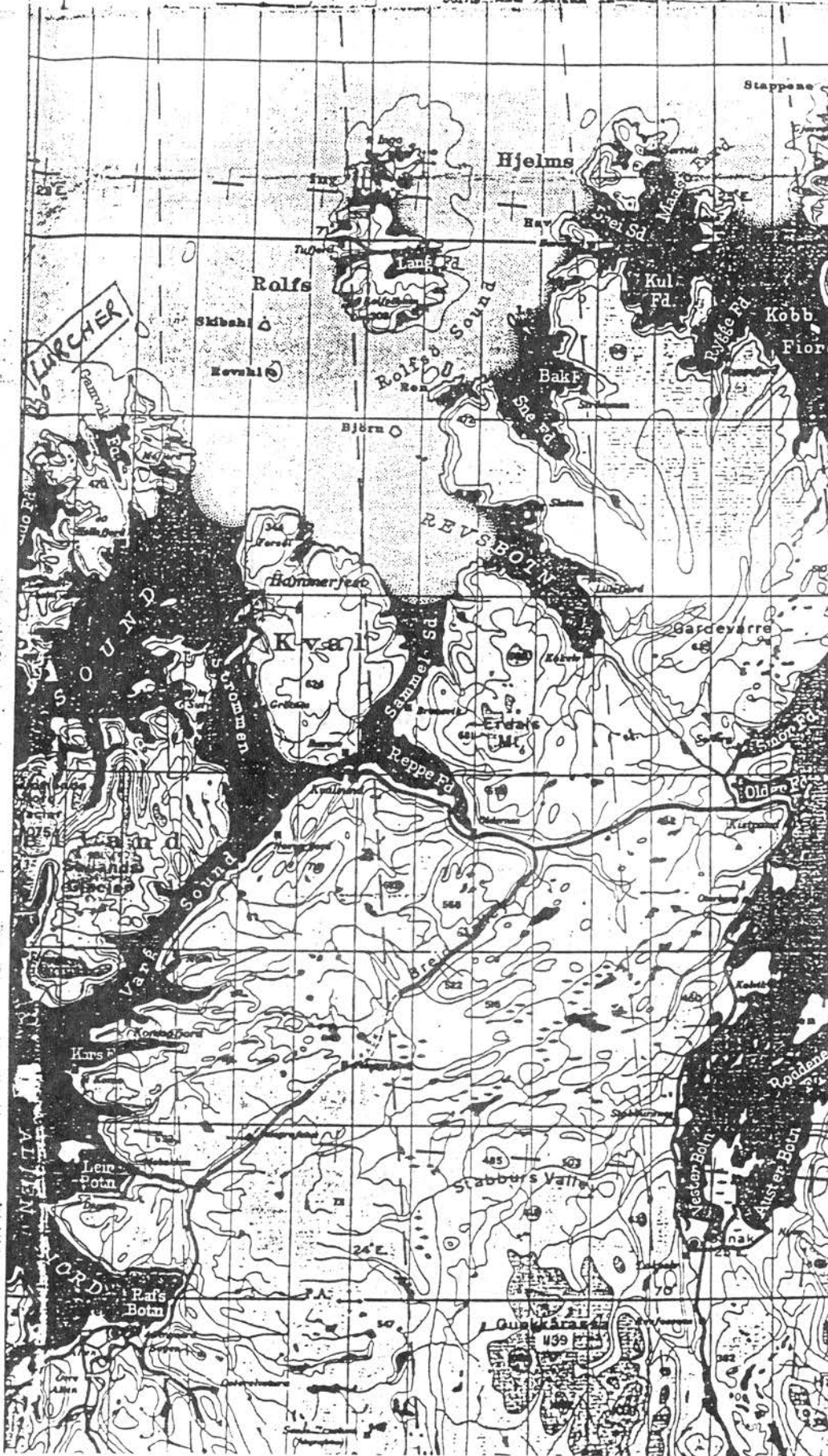
Because she was in the shelter of a mountain rising steeply from Altenfjord, damage was not extensive. One of her supply ships, the C. A. Larson, received several direct hits.

Quays, barracks and repair shops were also heavily damaged.—Reuter.

No announcement has been made of a raid by British aircraft on Altenfjord on July 21. Since that date the Tirpitz is reported to have been seen on trials in the fjord.

**NAVY PLANES  
HIT TIRPITZ AT  
MAST HEIGHT**

West turned back before reaching the coast. Fighters under Lt.-Cmdr. B. F. Wiggington, D.S.C. peeled off to attack the aerodrome at Banak and shipping and installations in Bille Fjord. Other fighters led by Lt.-Cmdr. R. H. Richardson, of Gisborne, New Zealand



including Cdr. Cdr. Biggwithers attack smashed station on Lopper. Merchantman in Fjord, set a Bukta, blew up Fjord and damage on other batteries. Two Hellicats did not return. The main force of Tirpitz, eight way to make a on Hammer. Impossible to of the attack. Cause of the German. Another fire in Sjern.

**S RAKED**  
Class destroyers cannon fire and be been left in an oil tank on

bed

# NAVY PLANES HIT TIRPITZ AT MAST HEIGHT

## FLEET AIR ARM'S BIGGEST RAID

From ARTHUR OAKESHOTT,  
Reuter's Special Correspondent  
with the Home Fleet

### ABOARD A BRITISH CARRIER OFF NORWAY

(Delayed).  
The Fleet Air Arm, in the words of a wing leader, "blasted hell out of the Tirpitz and all adjacent targets" in its latest attacks on the German battleship in her hiding-place in Alten Fjord, Norway.

It was the greatest Fleet Air Arm operation of the war—and may well prove to be the last naval operation of the war in European waters. It was also the Home Fleet's most daring defiance of Hitler's fortress.

There were four strikes on the Alten Fjord area—some so close to the Norwegian coast that I could see with the naked eye the snow of the mountains and glaciers.

So near did we get that speculation was rife on the lower deck as to whether we would run the Tirpitz or whether we would get shore leave in Norway once we had anchored in Alten Fjord.

A year ago we counted ourselves lucky if we managed to slip away from the coast in the total darkness. Now we could "stooge" up and down in full sight of German-held Norway.

#### LOG OF ATTACKS

In a 600-mile sortie from the wind-swept Air Defence position of this carrier, I watched each strike take off and return.

Here is the log of the strikes over a seven-day period:

August 22: The largest number of planes ever to attack Norway, including Barracudas, Corsairs, Hellcats and Seafires, took off at 11 a.m. for the Norwegian coast. Owing to bad weather the Barracudas led on every strike, but the last, by Lt.-Cmdr. A. J. Temple

West, turned back before reaching the coast. Fighters under Lt.-Cmdr. B. F. Wigginton, D.S.O., peeled off to attack the aerodrome at Banak and shipping and installations in Bille Fjord.

Other fighters led by Lt.-Cmdr. R. H. Richardson, O.B.E., borne, New Zealand, and Maj. V. E. G. Cheesman, Royal Marines, of Cheltenham, screamed in low over the Tirpitz.

Wigginton's fighters had what they called a "pretty party," beating up wireless stations at Gaasnes and Kolvik, leaving them burning and severely damaged. They destroyed four Blohm and Voss float planes at Bille Fjord with cannon fire, and also an HE 115 at Banak.

#### U-BOAT DAMAGED

On the way back a U-boat was found on the surface outside Hammerfest, the most northerly town in the world, and was left severely damaged.

Two flak ships in Lang Fjord were set on fire, and other shipping heavily attacked.

Two B and V float-planes approached the Fleet, but were sent down in flames within a few seconds by our fighters.

From this strike one Seafire and one Hellcat did not return and one Barracuda crashed into the sea on returning to the Fleet. It was in this action that the frigate Bickerton was torpedoed and sunk.

August 22—At 5.30 p.m. P.M. Richardson took eight of his Hellcats out and Cheesman accompanied him with eight other fighters.

Richardson's men made a daring low-level attack on the Tirpitz while Cheesman's fighters beat up wireless stations at Havik, Sorvaer, and severely damaged a ship east of Slidre.

Two fighters were first reported missing from this strike, but they had landed on another carrier.

August 24—Aircraft, including Barracudas, Corsairs and Hellcats, made six afternoon attacks on the Alten Fjord area.

The Germans operated smoke generators to obscure the Tirpitz and masses of smoke filling the fjord made observation of the results impossible.

In this attack Richardson was killed when his plane was hit by an A.A. shell.

#### DIVERSIONS

Other fighters, including Corsairs, led by Lt.-Cmdr. Biggs, made a diversionary attack, smashed a naval wireless station on Lopper Island, left a Narvik class destroyer and a large merchantman in flames in Lang Fjord, set a tanker on fire at Bille Fjord, and inflicted severe damage on other shipping and shore batteries.

From this strike two Hellcats and one Corsair did not return.

August 29: While the main force divided down on the Tirpitz, eight Seafires broke away to make a diversionary attack on Hammerfest. Again it was impossible to observe the results of the attack on the Tirpitz because of the German smoke screen. Another tanker was set on fire in Sjern.

#### DESTROYERS RAKED

Three Narvik class destroyers were raked with cannon fire and are believed to have been left in flames.

Other fighters set an oil tank on fire on shore at Lervik.

# Leader of Hellcats bombed Tirpitz three times

It was revealed that the German battleship Admiral Tirpitz, lying in Alten Fjord, was bombed during four strikes on this and other targets in the area from August 22 to 29.

One of the attacks was a New Zealand pilot of a Hellcat, Lt.-Commander R. H. Richardson, whose daring cost him his life. Three times he led his squadron in daring, low-level sweeps over the Tirpitz, diving down through intense flak to reach his target.

On the first strike, the Royal Marines, whose fighters accompanied Richardson's squadron, and to Reuter's correspondent on the carrier.

**Awful flak**

I have never seen anything so equal. Ritchie's courage and determination. The way that chap pressed home his attack in all that awful flak was staggering.

On the second strike, after attacking the Tirpitz, Ritchie's squadron strafed German radio stations. When his ammunition was low, he lowered his straggler to land. The straggler was shot down almost as he was about to land.

On the third strike, Ritchie's squadron led his Hellcats through a hail of flak from the shore and across the snowed mountains around the sweep in at very low level over the fjord. This time

## HIS PLANE PULLED OFF GERMAN AERIAL

THE greatest Fleet Air Arm operation of the war, in which aircraft carriers sailed to within sight of the Norwegian coast of Hitler's "fortress," was announced by the Admiralty last night.

Richardson's successor as squadron leader was an officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy from Sourabaya.

In the final strike of the operation, his Hellcat was hit in the nose, the oil feed severed, and the whole aircraft smothered in black oil. The windscreen and his goggles were black, and he was almost blinded.

On the homeward trip he waited until all his pilots had landed in case he should crash on deck and delay the rest. Then, lifting his goggles to peer with screwed-up eyes through the 88 mm slipstream, he went in and put the aircraft down in a perfect landing.

#### Hangar left blazing

The results of this great operation, in addition to the damage claimed to the Tirpitz, were:

Nine enemy aircraft destroyed; two enemy aircraft damaged; one carrier full of bombs

Six radio stations, part of action; one U-boat torpedoed; one U-boat depot ship heavily damaged; four destroyers hit and left blazing.

Five merchant ships set on fire; two oil tankers set on fire; one flak ship blown up; one boom vessel ablaze; two armed trawlers severely damaged; two landing craft damaged; several flak ships severely damaged or afire.

The Tirpitz was attacked with large and medium-sized bombs. Some hits were claimed, but owing to smoke screens put up by the enemy it was not possible to observe the results.

During the operation the frigate Bickerton (Commander D. F. W. MacIntyre, DSO, RN) was torpedoed and sunk, and 11 naval aircraft were lost.

In August the Bickerton, under Commander MacIntyre, sank a large U-boat, his eighth U-boat of the war, and his second in two

July 19th Early this morning we were still in the Submarine area & we have reports that the RAF have already bagged two.

At 1030 all Pilots were called to the Admiral's Cabin - the Intelligence Room - for a talk by the Captain. This amounted to an explanation of the operation as a whole & more particularly, of why Mattholie & Baker-Faulkner were lost. He assumed that they must have had a very large compass error & that Mattholie's YE Beacon aerial had been snapped off by his belly tank when he'd released it. Apparently the F.D.O. had requested that all the other aircraft be landed on during the most critical period so as to clear the screen. However this had to be refused because of the U-Boat menace at the time. There is a possibility that the F.D.O. was vectoring the wrong section of Corsairs & Barracuda's. In short, no one really knows what went wrong. The fact remains that 1841 have lost an excellent Senior Subby & the FAA one of their "finest" T.B.R. Commanders.

At 1430, 10 Corsairs took off to fly to Hatston. These were followed later by two more flown by the C.O. & S/Lt Maitland whose engine had failed to start two hours earlier. The entire Squadron piled into a lighter at 1915 & set course for Scapa pier.

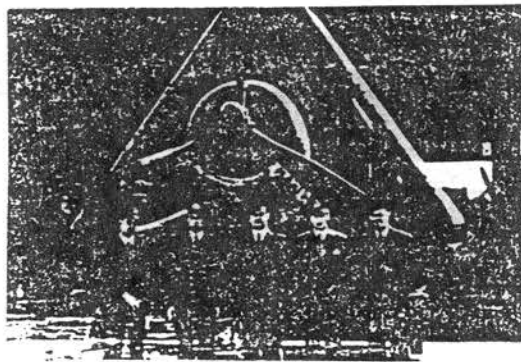
July 20th unloading of baggage & transport difficulties  
For some reason\* the troops didn't leave Scapa Pier till 0030 hours & finally reached Hatston at 0300, completely cheesed. And of course there was no accommodation arranged when they did arrive.

Those Pilots whose cabs were u/s or who simply hadn't one, left for the mainland just after lunch in the D.H. 89's. They were S/Lt's Ferguson, Maitland, Brown, Wood, Harrison & Crosland. These lucky people were at Inverness by 1400 & caught the 1620 which was Southbound. The rest of the Squadron are to fly the Corsairs to Belfast & everyone is to return there after leave. S/Lt's Griffin & Hall returned from leave today & are going aboard the ship.

Sometime after the first group of Officers had left, a signal was received cancelling the proposed trip to Belfast. The aircraft are being left at Hatston.

July 21st The troops left in the morning by transport & ship to the mainland for their two weeks leave. They are to be back at Hatston PM on Monday, August 7. Officers left in small batches by air transport for Inverness. S/Lt McLisky remained at Hatston for a day or two because of insufficient air transport.

July 22nd to Aug 7 1841 Squadron were on leave. Incidents during this period are left to the imagination, though this is certainly no hardship!



Aug 7th A very few keen types arrived back today. The troops had a 24 hour extension & aren't due back till PM tomorrow.

Aug 8th All the Officers returned today except for a party of five who were last seen at Crewe by P.O. Philbrick. They were heading for Belfast & obviously hadn't been informed of the change of plans before leave began!

Aug 9th Most of the day was spent in doing D.I.s on the cabs and cleaning them. The Hangar in which they've been parked for the past two weeks is the favourite roosting place of a flock of starlings. The U.S.A.A.F. has absolutely nothing on them for precision bomb-

ing! Late in the afternoon, all Pilots went up for ½ hour each to get used to this rugged shipboard fighter once more!

Aug 10th

The Squadron struck out today and ADDLed rather ropily most of the afternoon. The missing party of five - S/Lt's Ferguson, Maitland, Wood, Harrison and Crosland turned up at lunchtime. They've had quite an adventurous time. They reported to HMS RAVEN, EGLINTON (a long way from Belfast!) at about 1630. No one knew why they were there, but 1842 had just left that afternoon for the FORMIDABLE, so the Commander(F) worked quickly & sent them off at 1730 by truck to Bangor. They arrived there at about 2000 in time to pick up the FORMIDABLE. She went to sea early that morning & anchored next afternoon in Lamlash. There these Officers suggested to Wings that they should go on the Manx Maider to the mainland. Unfortunately they missed this ferry, remained in Lamlash that night & got a trip over to Ardrossan next morning in an M.T.B. They then went to Ayr for air transport but were completely unsuccessful & had to get to Inverness by train over night. From Inverness, air transport was organised & they've returned this morning.

Aug 11th

We are still waiting for signals from the FORMIDABLE to find out what's up. Meanwhile S/Lt Humphries continues to swing compasses all day.

Aug 12th

Still no flying but more compass swinging. Something's up & we can't quite make out what it is.

Aug 13th

Some sort of signal has arrived & now all but 6 Pilots of the Squadron are going to Skaeabrae (RAF Station) for an unspecified length of time. At the moment it seems that these six are going to be a sort of P.R.U. for the big strike, while 1842 do the escorting. Those going to Skaeabrae left at 1400 & the troops left about an hour later.

Aug 14th

P.O. Smith, P.O. Hall and 18 ratings went aboard. The C.O. gave the remaining Officers gen on what was up. It's the TIRPITZ again, but he is not sure what the 6 aircraft from 1841 Squadron are going to do. At 1730 the C.O. & S/Lt's Morten, McLisky, Maitland, Ferguson, Glading and Woodward took off for the ship but they were recalled because of a prang on board. The rest of 1842 also landed at Hatston & Lt Gray from Skaeabrae. Late that evening we received a signal to go aboard by ship's boat, so we hurriedly packed & left by truck.

Aug 15th

Next morning still mystified we saw the Captain who explained the situation. At first he was to have had us back aboard, but until yesterday 1842 had been good enough & there was no point in changing our troops all over again. But yesterday, they'd had a bad barrier prang, someone in the drink with engine failure & another Pilot taking a wave-off after the "cut". Thus he'd decided to have 12 of 1841 & 12 of 1842. The 7 Pilots of 1841 were to do some D.L.s in 1842 cabs & return to Hatston to pick up their own cabs tomorrow. In the evening S/Lt's Brown, MacKinnon, Hartshorn & Gray landed on from Skaeabrae. The D.L.s went safely, though they suffered from lack of practice. We should be better in a day or two & with a little more practice. We are going to have some special troops aboard.

Aug 16th

At 0015 S/Lt's Morten, Glading, McLisky, Ferguson, Woodward, Blaikie and Maitland with four members of 1842 Squadron left in the ship's boat for Scapa Pier. It was very dark. About 0245 we were utterly lost but came across an Escort Carrier, HMS NABOB, in the darkness & went alongside. The S/Lt in charge climbed the ladder & disappeared for 10 minutes or so. He reappeared & we started off once more. At 0315 we were lost again & the engine stopped! Fortunately there was a drifter alongside who took us in tow back to the FORMID. This was a very short distance & we must have been round in an enormous circle. LCDR Hawk appeared in a vivid red dressing gown very sleepily, but organised things immediately & we were soon drinking cocoa & eating sandwiches in the Wardroom. An hour later we went aboard a lighter & reached Scapa Pier about 0600 and were at RNAS Hatston by 0630.

There the C.O. was waiting with the serviceable chariots and about 0730 we were airborne & ready to set course for the ship. All three 1842 Corsairs had undercarriage trouble. One couldn't retract at all & on the other two the doors were not shut properly. The first returned to Hatston where S/Lt McLisky was still grounded. 7 Zebra having refused to start.

The C.O. and the remainder were over the ship about 0800 & landed on safely. The



Captain saw all Pilots and apologised for his S/Lt in charge of the boat & recommended that they should all have breakfast & then sleep. They wouldn't be needed till 1630 for a strike with the Barracuda's.

As it was, there were no strikes at all because of bad weather & by teatime the ship was back at anchor in the Flow.

S/Lt's Griffin & Ralston turned up late in the evening. S/Lt Hall is ashore & trying hard to come aboard.

Aug 17th

The ship put to sea early in the morning and at 0900 Pilots were called to the Intelligence Room for briefing. The exercise was to be a normal strike with the Squadron flying in two flights of six. 1842 Squadron joined up in a formation of 12. They are to stay with the Avengers. We are with the Barracuda's.

Final briefing took place in the AOR and we were airborne about 1045. There were showers and patches of fog about, but in spite of this the Squadron joined up pretty smartly. We were still two short though: S/Lt McLisky had bangings and dropping off of mags & hadn't taken off. S/Lt Woodward in 7 Fox couldn't start up & was struck down. S/Lt Hartshorn wasn't flying anyway so out of 11 possibles we finished up with 9.

Taking departure we missed the Barra's. The C.O. saw that the Avengers were still in position & took it that the Barra's were continuing to circle though they were actually just leaving. The actual attack on the target went moderately well, though the Hellcats did a sort of double attack & nearly wrote off a number of the Squadron & themselves off! The two wings of Barra's were somewhat split up which didn't make things any easier for the C.O. After the attack, Barra's, Avengers, Corsairs & Hellcats made their get away low over the sea. 1842 Squadron landed on first and we followed afterwards, all safely.

Afterwards the Squadron had a short discussion on the exercise & this evening we are going aboard the INDEFATIGABLE to see a respectable relief model of the target and go into details.

S/Lt Reeve came aboard very early this morning with a small number of troops, specially selected.

This evening was guest night & a number of WRNS Officers came aboard for supper. The Marine Band played & a successful Peter Uncle operation was carried out in the Ward-room Ante-Room.

Aug 18th

The Flow looked very pleasant this morning with sun shining and a breeze blowing. Nothing much happened before lunch until at about 1100 we had a gale warning. After that there was any amount of activity on deck. Just after lunch the ship left the Flow, all the Corsairs being firmly lashed down by that time. At 1530 engines were run up & warmed & the aircraft were then lashed down again.

At 1900 the Capain broadcast over the loudspeaker system to tell everyone that we were after the TIRPITZ once again & that several attacks would probably be made. He expected that we would be away about two weeks, which is definitely the FULL! An hour later he let the ratings of the Squadrons know what he thought about their maintenance & outlined the future organisation thereof. The troops are to work 10 hours a day if their maintenance is 100%, otherwise 12 hrs but no more except in extreme emergency. When a crew have their a/c 100% serviceable, they are to help on another a/c. When a complete Squadron is serviceable, that Squadron will help the other to come up to scratch. 2130 Commander Griffith lectured on U-Boats & homing. The Squadron is now standing a regular ready A/S patrol.

Aug 19th

The sea was quite heavy all day and the Escort Carriers and Destroyers had a particularly bad time. The Squadron stood A/S patrol with 1842 & engines of the cabs on deck were warmed up three or four times during the day. At 0930 we listened to a most interesting lecture on Prison Camps, escaping from them and what happens when one is taken prisoner. This was given by a Lt David James RNVR, once Commander of a Gunboat & now in a special branch of Intelligence, who had only recently escaped from Germany himself. He

had some extremely good tales to tell & a lot of excellent gen as well. Afterwards we were issued with maps & photo's & the C.O. gave us a further briefing.

Aug 20th Sea less heavy today but the ship's still moving about a good deal. Engines on deck were run up periodically during the day. It was extremely cold on deck. At 1330 Norwegian money & a collection of maps all in a watertight package were issued & at 1700 ~~we had our final briefing by CDR Griffith & "Wings". The force is larger than last time~~ Apart from the Hellcats with bombs, there are numbers of Avengers with mines and Seafire shooting up Submarine Bases & airfields in the district! The same number of Barra's as before and of course 24 Corsairs. 1842 incidentally, are to remain with the Avengers. Call signs, radio gen & so on were given us, in fact all details that we could possibly need for the trip. And all crews were to be in bed by 2100!

By 2300 we knew for certain that the whole strike was off, for the time being anyway. Clouds over the target were the cause. Further outlook doesn't look too good either.

Aug 21st Quite a nice morning & much warmer than yesterday. Clouds still over the target. The sea had quietened down considerably. Engines run up at regular intervals on deck. In the Hangar there seems to be a friendly competition in progress as to who can produce the cleanest cab. They are looking practically brand new, some of them!

Complete flap on deck about 1500. A contact report from some of the Destroyers & depth charges exploding to Port of the Fleet. Very nice to watch but nothing came of it. About 1530 the Fleet did a "Port 180°" which went very nicely indeed! We hope the show comes off tomorrow but the weather doesn't seem to be on our side at all.

Aug 22nd The weather doesn't look at all favourable again today. However about 0900 all Pilots and crews were called to the AOR for briefing. The Avengers are definitely not coming with us. Conditions are certainly quite unsuitable for their job. 1842 are now to fly to Port of the Barra's with the Fireflies in front of them. 1841 are to be to Starboard of the strike with the Hellcats just in front. The join up was well carried out and we were all set for the trip to the coast. The route this time was past ING Island & REN Island towards ERDALS mountain & then up the BREID valley to KAAFIORD and the target. Thus the Carriers were within 50 miles of the coast which we could actually see during the rendezvous. About 10 to 15 miles from the coast the Barra's began to climb but they hadn't got higher than 1000' to 2000' when we saw that something was wrong and they were turning back. The Hellcats and Fireflies didn't follow suit very sensibly. We did! After all that time waiting for the Barracuda's & then having to watch them drop their bombs in the water when Hammerfest and the Submarine base was within 20 miles, didn't make us feel kindly towards LCDR Temple-West. Later we were to discover that the latter's Barra had gone u/s & it was LCDR Noel who was responsible! The C.O. returned practically to the coast with his flight but there was nothing doing & we came all back to spend another hour waiting for the Barra's - this time to land on. So we were cheese with 1842! News received that afternoon didn't help at all. We heard that HMS NABOB, the Canadian Carrier (Escort) & a Frigate had been torpedoed. It looked as if we were going to lose a complete Squadron of Avengers and some Martlets. The great excitement of the day came when enemy a/c were reported in the area & Seafires were scrambled from the INDEFATIGABLE. Almost immediately they gave the Tally-Ho & soon afterwards the two Jerries were coming down! They were reported later to be B.V. 138's. The Seafires had no trouble & they don't seem to have taken much evasive action. That evening we heard that the torpedoed Frigate had been sunk, that the Hellcats had got a direct hit on the TIRPITZ' and that the Seafires had destroyed about 9 enemy fighters on Banak.

Aug 23rd Pretty fierce weather all day & nothing much happened at all. We'd left the INDEFATIGABLE & were going next to refuel our Destroyers. Cabs were run up and cleaned during the day and all are serviceable at this moment.

The NABOB is now limping home at 7 knots under her own steam. The BIG Strike is supposed to come off tomorrow but the Instructor Commander isn't optimistic - clouds, showers & even our Reverend friend, Harry Clampers.

Aug 24th The weather looked all against us & no one guessed that the strike would come off.

For some reason or other we were all woken up at 0600 in spite of this! Again the Instructor Commander wasn't enthusiastic about prospects & we resigned ourselves to a further day's wait. However, about 1330 everyone was called to the AOR for briefing & as we came on deck, we saw that the weather had cleared up marvellously. Over the target it was supposed to be even better than we'd hoped for. Even if the Barra's turned back we are going in. Four of 1842 are carrying 1000 lb bombs & 7 Tare, our only cab fitted with racks, is also loaded up. S/Lt MacKinnon is flying Tare! These five are to be below in the Hangar until the Barra's are off & then will be ranged & started up as soon as possible. Both 1842 and ourselves have AA targets in the Fiord & particularly the Flak-ships there are to be looked after. The scheme for escort out, or rather in to the coast is the same as on the 22nd, but we are using the old route, via LOPPEN, SILDEN & the Western end of LANG Fiord, to reach the target. We are attacking from the South as before.

The first a/c were off at 1430. All Corsairs got off except S/Lt Glading in King, one of 1842 cabs. It wouldn't start. Rendezvous took the usual 50 to 60 minutes & then the strike took departure. The Carriers were about 64 miles from the nearest land, but visibility was good & during our long rendezvous, we had plenty of time to see the Norwegian mountains, slightly snow covered, in the distance.

We were over the target about 1600, the Hellcats being the first to go in. We followed directly afterwards with the Fireflies. Light AA fire from the South of the Fiord did not seem to be nearly as thick as on July 17th, but the heavy stuff was far thicker & there were any number of flaming onions about. Smoke in the Fiord was extremely thick & none of the Barra's reported even seeing the TIRPITZ when they came back. Both the Hellcats & our bomb-carrying Corsairs saw the target though. At least half a dozen Flak ships were dealt with by us & 1842, some were just silenced, some were left on fire & one exploded & was left sinking! 1842 set fire to two Arado floatplanes at the airfield at Altagaard. These were moored at Bukta, to be more accurate, but pillboxes, Hangars & the Tower at ALTAGAARD were shot up. On the return journey, Destroyers in Lang Fiord were attacked & other Flak-ships along the way, particularly one off Lilden which was surrounded by Corsairs.

S/Lt Hartshorn was the first back at the ship. His engine was on fire, long flames coming from the exhausts & one flap had been shot away. He signalled for an emergency but the ship couldn't turn into the wind immediately because of the rest of the Fleet. Even when it had, he didn't like his first approach & went round again. Next time he was within 50 yards of the Batsman when he suddenly dived into the sea about 50 yds from the Quarterdeck of the FORMIDABLE. The nose & wheels hit the water together & the cockpit went under, coming up again a moment later. S/Lt Hartshorn was out of it immediately & he was seen swimming. Never has anyone ever got out of a plane quicker! He was soon picked up by the Destroyer, RAMBLER. An enormous amount of circling had to be done by the rest of the Corsairs before they could land on. This was due to two Barracuda's getting the barrier. The first was an A/S patrol Barra which landed without its hook & the second was one of the strike a/c. All the Corsairs got on safely except for

S/Lt Butterworth, 1842 who got a barrier. S/Lt Morten almost went over the side & burst a tyre instead! Four Corsairs landed on the INDEFATIGABLE - S/Lt's Brown, MacKinnon, Maitland & S/Lt Quilter of 1842. They found the deck definitely wider than the FORMIDABLE's! S/Lt MacKinnon had no hydraulic fluid, a bullet having lodged in the reservoir. He put the wheels down with the CO<sub>2</sub> bottle & landed without flaps. Watchers on the INDEFATIGABLE who had never before seen a Corsair land on, must have been profoundly shaken at the speed with which he came in! His Port aileron & servo tab were shot up badly too. S/Lt Brown had a bullet hole in the top of his cockpit cover & a cracked Port panel in the windshield. S/Lt Maitland had been hit in the oil cooler, Port wing. Fortunately only a very small leak had developed. On the FORMIDABLE, S/Lt Ferguson had a gaping hole in the leading edge of his Port wing caused by a cannon shell. In the same wing an explosive bullet had hit the ammunition box & exploded off half a dozen rounds. These, luckily, were AP's, not incendiary!! S/Lt Blaikie had a bullet hole through his fin. S/Lt's Morten and McLisky had been hit in their wings: McLisky in the wing root and Morten in both Port and Starboard.

S/Lt Clive Woodward did not return. S/Lt Hartshorn was his wingman and of course

no one has been able to interrogate him. Two members of 1842 Squadron are missing - S/Lt French, one of the bomb carriers, & Thornberry, who was unable to get rid of his belly tank, which is reported to have blown up as he was making a forced landing in Alter Fiord. LCDR Richardson, N.Z. C.O. of the Dutch Squadron 1840, is missing with his Senior Pilot. Two Fireflies have not returned. No Barracuda's were lost, though an Air Gunner in one of 828 Squadron's Barra's was badly hit in the leg. He has subsequently lost his limb but is coming along excellently.

The only hits claimed on the TIRPITZ were by the fighters: one near miss & a hit. This may have been a Hellcat with it's 500 lb or a Corsair & it's 1000 lb.

This seems to have been a far more profitable "do" than that on July 17th & it's most satisfactory that no Barra's were lost.

Aug 25th

Nothing much happened on board FORMIDABLE. It was extremely rough during the night & throughout most of the day as well and blowing a gale in addition. On board the INDEFATIGABLE, engines were run up. 7 Baker was found to have a u/s starter, so the Hellcat troops swung the prop, with a rope & canvas "cup" on the end! It was started after about a dozen shots. At 2130 the weather cleared and the seas were calmer and it was decided to fly the Corsairs off the INDEFAT on to the FORMIDABLE. These four had plenty of room to take off, the last one being parked just forward of the after lift & 25 knots of wind over the deck. 7 Baker was started with a rope after the second pull. All landed on safely.

Aug 26th

Horrible weather all day. At last they put the pranged Barra's on deck & put the Corsairs below. The wings of all these are rusted over now & they cannot be run up. The weather continued the same all day. 7 Tare, S/Lt MaKinnon's Corsair, was discovered to have had a bullet clean through the mainplane. It was the same one that had punctured the hydraulic reservoir.

Aug 27th

Miserable weather again this morning. S/Lt Blaikie's efforts bore fruit when two more Barra's were brought on deck & two more Corsairs went below. August 30th is the day scheduled for the next strike. About 2330 one of the Destroyers got a contact & dropped depth charges. Everyone to Action Stations.

Aug 28th

More miserable weather. Much colder than yesterday and patches of fog about. Crews worked hard on Corsairs in the Hangar. There was some artillery practice in the Hangar about 1830 & the 1841 S.D.O. was piped for! It was one of our kites but not one of our Armourers. The C.O. & LCDR Garland were flown over in a Barracuda to HMS INDEFATIGABLE by LCDR Swanton(?). They returned about 1800 when the fog had lifted.

Aug 29th

The news the C.O. brought with him from the INDEFATIGABLE was that the strike is to take place today, weather permitting. If the Barra's can't make it, conditions being unsuitable for them, an alternate target for 12 Corsairs, the Fireflies & Seafires is planned. This will be against Submarine Depot Ships & oil storage tanks at Hammerfest. If the large strike is abandoned, the Hellcats & Fireflies will have a go at Hammerfest or Lang Fiord. We are supposed to return!

Weather was foggy, wet and cold as usual but towards lunchtime, we began to see some sunlight. At 1430 we were called to the AOR for briefing. The plan was very much the same as before, except that we're now reduced to 16 in number. The route is practically the same as on the 24th except that the whole strike is to keep low going up KVAENANGEN FIORD & climb only at the last moment. It's hoped that this will delay the laying of the smoke. The C.O.'s flight & Lt Gray's are to come in this time in line abreast from the West, then wheel & return.

1530 was H-hour & the FORMIDABLE managed to get off 33 a/c in about 26 minutes. The rendezvous was, if anything, a little quicker than usual but the C.O. positioned himself rather too far up when the Barra's took departure & had to weave to slow up. As the coast was approached, clouds could be seen to be pretty low but the Fiord was clear & we kept down low over it for some distance before the Barra's began climbing. We had to weave fairly violently in order to keep down to the Barra's speed & also to avoid the clouds, of which there were a number around 8000'. Unfortunately the Barra's went to the wrong Fiord first! This wasted 15 valuable minutes & by the time we reached the target

it was completely covered in the usual smoke screen. Some minutes before, Seafires over the target had reported that it was quite clear.

1841 Squadron found it impossible to strafe the targets in KAAFIORD. The smoke was extremely dense & up to 1000' - 1500'. Heavy AA fire was coming up through it, flaming onions amongst this. The Corsairs swept across the smoke & then went searching for suitable targets. The airfield at Altagaard came in for some attention again & S/Lt Ferguson reports some ARADO 196's in rather an awkward position just off Bukta. AA positions of all sorts were attacked & Flak ships as well. LANG FIORD was empty & the Destroyers were all together with steam up in LEIR BOTN. It's not certain whether these were five Narvik Class Destroyers or three of these & two escort vessels. Anyway, they came in for their share of strafing. Their fire however, was accurate, as Lt Gray well knows - he returned with an extremely large hole in his rudder. In fact, all our Corsairs were badly shot up. S/Lt's Brown & McLisky & the C.O. were the only members to escape notice. S/Lt Morten returned with practically half his starboard aileron missing. S/Lt Ferguson had collected half a dozen holes in his fuselage & wings, some too close to the cockpit for comfort. S/Lt Glading was hit in the tail while MacKinnon had 14 holes, including one through the IFF & another in his oil tank. He was particularly lucky in landing on first time because there wasn't a drop of oil left by the time he'd been struck down in the Hangar! S/Lt Maitland had three hits including a cannon shell just behind the seat. This disabled his hydraulic system & destroyed the Oxygen filter. He was the last to land on & the ship gave him extra wind for a no-flap landing. The C.O. of 1842 returned with just sufficient stabilizer left to keep his elevator working. At one point, just after being hit, he was reported to be out of control. He made an excellent landing. One Firefly blew up & S/Lt Walker in a Corsair from 1842 was shot down. One Barracuda ditched West of Silden and two of them went into the barrier. One, whose undercarriage collapsed, gave the Captain an opportunity to use his ditching ramp, and over she went with a big splash. No Corsairs pranged landing on which was rather a feat considering their shot up condition. No definite hits are claimed by anyone. 1842 report near misses or possibles. Barracuda's again did not see the target.

Aug 30th Pilots standing at readiness for CAP. Barracuda's flown on and off on A/S. At the moment we have four serviceable Corsairs. The ship's returning to Scapa where we are to pick up the rest of the Squadron. We are then sailing to Rosyth & some leave! One more Barracuda pranged on landing - wheels gave way again.

Aug 31st Nothing to report today except that an identified a/c came on the screen about 1800 & we almost had two of our Corsairs up in pursuit! The nearest this plane ever got to the ship was 36 miles.

Sep 1st The weather's cheered up considerably & we actually have some sun & blue sky. The usual Barracuda prang on deck after lunch. Undercarriage gave way. This is S/Lt Foulkes' third effort during the trip! The C.O. is flying off at 0630 tomorrow morning & the serviceable Barra's.

Sep 2nd The C.O. flew off successfully & set course for Skaebrae. About 1100 we were in the Flow where we were glad to get masses of mail - the number of bags was reported to be 120. It was very welcome after so long. S/Lt Hartshorn came aboard directly we reached the Flow & apparently none the worse for his ordeal. He had quite enjoyed his trip home on the RANGER, but muttered something about it's being a dry ship! We left the Flow in the evening for Rosyth, where stores are to be taken in before the ship leaves in about two weeks time. The ship's company are having about five or six days leave & those of 1841 and 1842 who took part in the strikes are having 8 or 9 days.

Sep 3rd At 0700 all 1841 Pilots were to fly off. Unfortunately no one had woken the crews of their a/cs & it wasn't till nearly 0800 that they finally took off. Even then, S/Lt Maitland in 7 Baker failed to become airborne due to a big mag drop. Other Officers of the Squadron left behind were S/Lt's Glading, Brown, Blaikie and Hartshorn. These unlucky types however managed to get ashore and free by lighter at about 1430. Those at Donibristle went on leave about lunchtime and have to be back by 1200 on Sept 11th.

- Sep 11th By midday all the types who had left the ship or Donibristle on Sept 3 were back. S/Lt Crosland was on duty in the ship where most of the troops were. S/Lt's Humphries and Connolly were just enjoying five days well-earned leave. S/Lt Hall was also still on leave while S/Lt Harrison was hanging about at Donibristle hoping to get in some D.L.T.'s. Now and then he would fly over to RAF Turnhouse and ADDL.
- Sep 12th We are keeping 4 of our original Corsairs and the rest are to consist of practically brand new ones including some of 1843's. This Squadron had just returned to England. LCDR Evans has been recalled to N.Z. on compassionate leave & "Doc" is temporary C.O. The maintenance crowd at the air station are dealing with most of the work, but all cabs have to be harmonised & S/Lt Humphries & others have been doing valiant work at this. S/Lt Ferguson has had a tremendous job seeing to the armament of all the new a/c. For the rest of the Officers, life is easy though many of them have had tiring times - in Edinburgh & elsewhere!
- Sep 13th More compass swinging & harmonising. Filthy, damp weather all the time.
- Sep 14th The C.O. turned up today with Jack Kennedy who we haven't seen for a long time. He is to come all the way with us! Tomorrow the troops are to return to the ship about lunchtime & we land on the following morning. S/Lt's Hartshorn and Harrison will go aboard with the troops. S/Lt's Crosland and Hall are already there. 1842 and ourselves are now taking 16 Corsairs each. The remaining six, it is rumoured, are to fly out from Gib: some people are going to be lucky! \*Remaining Pilots D.I.'d their cabs in the rain, started engines and warmed up. Foul weather.
- \*Correction  
This should  
be the 15th.
- Sep 16th The weather cleared sufficiently for us to take off about 1000. The Squadron with 1842 came over in batches of 10, once an hour before landing on. One formation of five carried out a formation beat-up of the field. It is believed that they were somewhat out of practice! Everyone landed on safely & the same happened to 1842. Quite good considering how long it is since most of us flew, let alone landing on! The ship set course for the Flow at about 20 knots or more and was at anchor and taking on petrol by 2230.
- Sep 17th All sorts of rumours yesterday that we were going in at Greenock but the Captain announced this morning that our next stop is Gibraltar. It looks, therefore, as if this is the FULL at long last and we can expect some sunshine and heat! Three of our cabs - new ones - are to be flown out from Gibraltar & the lucky Pilots were those whose names were taken from a hat. The C.O. & S/Lt's MacKinnon & Hartshorn are the fortunate ones.
- Late this evening they suddenly decided that there is to be flying tomorrow & the crew of the aircraft concerned had to work late after having had a Make & Mend all afternoon.
- Sep 18th Flying was intended to begin at 0930 but eventually the first a/c was in the air at 1130! Consequently the D.L.T.'s which were to be practised weren't completed. Four a/c two of our & two of 1842's, went off for a long hop to do section attacks, formation work and so on. The C.O. was leading this foursome, who consisted of S/Lt Wood & Lt Gray with S/Lt Hartshorn on his wing. S/Lt's Morten and MacKinnon were the first to deck land. They had two TBF's in the circuit with them which didn't make things any easier. S/Lt's Brown & Maitland took over after them. Brown was soon back after two landings but Maitland took a number of wave-offs before he got down. S/Lt Glading, who went up after Brown, completed one landing before flying stopped for the day.
- Sep 19th 1842 did some flying today including a spot of dive bombing and we lost two perfectly good cabs - this is how it happened. Four of 1842 Pilots were up with belly tanks for a long hop, which involved them diving amongst other things. One of their Corsairs was ours & was being flown by S/Lt Bell. The other was being used for D.L.T.'s by S/Lt Railton. The latter's 1st approach had been a pretty <sup>copy one</sup> over to Starboard. His second consisted of a horrible approach & he again came down to Starboard, so much so that his wing caught one of the directors, which swung him practically over the side. The Corsair paused there a moment & then went into the drink, breaking off just aft of the fuselage and at the engine & taking one of the radio masts with it. S/Lt Railton was out practically before the cab hit the water & was seen in his dinghy shortly afterwards. He was

picked up by the WRANGLER - now famous in 1841 for being a dry ship! That was one of our cabs gone for six.

S/Lt Bell in J for JIG was one of the long hop members. He made an extremely fast approach, apparently didn't cut properly, & went straight into the barrier. He broke the first one, which wound itself round one oleo, and made the whole plane swing round so that he ended up with his tail mixed up in the second barrier. Damage to JIG is as follows: both flaps need changing, new engine required, both wings damaged & new ones needed, rudder & undercarriage damaged. In fact, a temporary write-off.

Sep 20th 1842 had another casualty this morning & for one moment we rather thought it was another of our cabs! Apparently he had an engine failure & went into the sea whence he was rescued by - you guessed it - the WRANGLER, that mercy ship! He was unhurt. After lunch the C.O. went up with three others for a long hop, including the full dive bombing. This looked quite effective from the Flight Deck and very terrifying particularly for S/Lt Harrison, who was sitting in his Corsair well aft!

S/Lt's Harrison & Crosland managed two D.L.'s each, Harrison for the first time ever. Since he only had ten degrees of flap the second time, this was a pretty good effort. Up the Squadron! Unfortunately we won't be able to soon if 1842 keep up the good work.

Sep 21st One Avenger from 848 Squadron was to do an exercise this morning - radar test - and then land at Gibraltar. This means that the Rock isn't far away. In fact the Corsairs and Avengers which flew off later reported that we were well in sight of land. Flying exercises this morning consisted of a join up - Avengers & Corsairs together - and then evasive action by the Avengers as the Corsairs attacked. Later section attacks were practised by the Corsairs on each other. Landings on were all twitchy! S/Lt Reeve came in very fast and held off till it looked as if he'd hit the barrier without touching the deck at all! At the last moment he pushed the stick forward and caught the last wire, just catching the barrier. Series of twitchy landings by the Avengers as well, most of whom caught the 8th or 9th wires. S/Lt Stradwick, 1842 Squadron, ditched his Corsair during this flight and was picked up by the WRANGLER. Fortunately it wasn't one of our a/c. The WRANGLER will soon be carrying the whole of 1842 if we go on like this! The cause was reported to be an engine failure.

The ship is supposed to be entering Gibraltar Harbour at 1800. As it turned out, we were there by 1630 & by 1700 we were all arrayed in Whites and lined up on the Flight Deck complete with Marine Band playing. From the Rock it must have looked quite respectable! Gib itself looked good, particularly for many of us who had never seen it before. The sun shone brilliantly and the sea was a deep blue. What a change to our two weeks cruise almost to the North Pole! The ship went straight into drydock.

The full Peter Uncle operation in the evening and then most of the types went ashore to see what it was all about. Some decided to have a go at the Yacht Club where grievous damage was done! Two enthusiasts even launched the President's Yacht and forgot - a mere detail of course - the stopcock, or whatever it is that keeps the water out, and the thing sank. Black!! Nothing doing at the hotels - the Cock and the Bristol - where everything was shut up. Officers wore No. 10's to go ashore - shades of Miami and so on for some of us!

Sep 22nd Very little happened in the morning: the troops were rather too interested in the local scenery and population to work hard and it was definitely hot in the sun. Fortunately we're in the shadow of the Rock for most of the morning and so it's fairly cool at the beginning of each day.

Everyone was given a Make & Mend in the afternoon and no time was lost in getting down to the beach for a bath. It takes about 15 minutes to reach the Officers beach by way of the tunnel. Marvellous bathing too.

Sep 23rd S/Lt Bastion left the ship this morning for the airfield, North Front, where he is to see about accommodations for the C.O., S/Lt's MacKinnon & Hartshorn, who will be flying to Ceylon. All Squadron Officers were inoculated & vaccinated after lunch. Weather was as fine and warm as yesterday & we could enjoy some more swimming. The

inoculations had been given in the Chest & affected quite a number of people, most of whom went to bed early to sleep it off.

- Sep 24th This morning Divisions were held on the Flight Deck and the Captain inspected the ships company and Squadron personnel. Squadron Officers fell in in a single rank in front of the Squadron, and after the inspection took up their places with the ship's company Officers. After the service which followed the inspection, the Captain spoke. His first news shook most of us. He said that we were to be in drydock for as much as 15 days because of loose bearings in one of the propellers. He went on to congratulate 1841 & 1842 for their part in TIRPITZ raids. He said he hadn't been able to do this before because of the Barra's being present. They hadn't had the opportunities that 1841 & 1842 had had! Admiral Burrows then spoke for a few moments but hadn't anything very surprising to say. The C.O., MacKinnon, Hartshorn & the three 1842 Pilots left the ship for North Front. Their trip has been delayed as well now.
- Sep 25th Nothing very much happened today. All Pilots attended a lecture on Army Cooperation given by Major (no name given) in the A.I.R. He and a Royal Marine Captain are on board for the purpose of making Pilots & aircrews interested in the Army and how it works, and particularly in explaining how a Carrier force can assist invasion by the Army. A whole course of lectures is planned. Weather still ideal for swimming.
- Sep 26th Six Corsairs are going ashore to North Front so that a certain amount of flying can be done by us and 1842. Some of these a/c are ours, the rest 1842's. S/Lt's McLisky, Morten, Bastion and Wood spent the time on a Destroyer which was undergoing trials and practising dropping of depth charges.
- Sep 27th 1842 flew today at North Front. Our Chief was at the airfield organising things with 1842 troops. From the beach many of us saw the Corsairs flying about and watched their enormous straight aways before they landed!
- Sep 28th We flew this morning. Six Pilots and 21 ratings left the ship at 0730 for North Front. Pilots were: S/Lt's Crosland, Brown, Connolly, Maitland and Wood with S/Lt Morten in charge. Formation exercises we practised and later section attacks. Pilots were still apt to be out of range for their attacks & wingmen were often rather too far from their leaders. After lunch, more formation and more section attacks followed by 15 mins aerobatics. S/Lt's Maitland and Wood spotted a J.U. 52 civil version flying from Spain to Spanish Morocco. It was silver & had the Spanish colours painted on it's tail.
- Sep 29th 1842 flying this morning at North Front. The C.O. and the crowd flying to Ceylon were to leave this morning but were held up because of bad weather. Low, threatening clouds. It cleared up later. The Squadron soccer team beat the Torpedoemen(?) 6 - 0 and are beginning to feel rather proud!
- Sep 30th Lt Gray and S/Lt's Glading, Ferguson, Humphries and Blaikie flew at North Front all day. The C.O. and his group of five left Gibraltar on their long flight. It should be an interesting one, though. At North Front, patrol formation, section attacks, dive bombing and attacks on a South African Ventura taking evasive action were carried out during the day.
- Oct 1st 1842 Squadron flying. We had a third Army Cooperation lecture on the Tactical Air Force. Unfortunately it was the same as the last one, but with very small differences.
- Oct 2nd S/Lt Morten with Reeve, Humphries, Bastion, Maitland and Wood were at North Front all day. Dive bombing with practice bombs was carried out before lunch & results varied. S/Lt Morten had most of his bombs very close indeed. All the other members had some close to the target, but unfortunately they can't remember for certain what happened on that particular run! It certainly needs plenty of practice. After lunch, attacks on a Ventura taking evasive action. Section attacks were found to be extremely difficult but splitting up the section & "bracketing" the bomber was thoroughly successful. Two sections would be ideal for the job. It is surprising how manoeuvrable the Ventura is!
- The Squadron played football against the Stokers in the morning & won 3 - 0.



- Oct 3rd It rained most of this morning and 1842 were unable to fly though they went out to North Front. At 1315 the troops and Officers attended a film in the after liftwell about "The Enemy, Japan". This film seemed rather familiar to American trained types.
- Oct 4th We flew this morning. Pilots at North Front were: Lt Gray and S/Lt's Blaikie, Brown, Connolly, Ferguson and Harrison. S/Lt Blaikie experienced more "Blue Smoke" today on take off and fully expected to finish up in the sea. He took off from halfway along the runway and seemed to have very little power. He tried pulling but nothing happened. Eventually he did stagger off & immediately retracted his wheels in case she did fall back. After lunch quite a breeze sprang up - at 90° to the only runway & after Lt Gray had made a slightly 'swervified' landing, the types ceased fire. Dive bombing was the order of the day again & S/Lt Bastion spent the time aboard the towing launch. On board this ship there's an absolute frenzy for Hangar cleanliness & drip trays every where. The troops are being well occupied.
- Oct 5th No flying because of unserviceability at North Front. All the Avengers are ground too because of rusting plugs.
- Pilots went to the A.I.R. about 1100 for a lecture on Japanese aircraft by one of 848 Observers.
- Captain's dinner in the evening, to which many of the Squadron were invited. It seems to have developed into the FULL P.U. and towards the end, Rugger was being played in the Wardroom!
- Oct 6th There are only a few Corsairs serviceable at North Front and S/Lt's Ferguson and Brown went there this morning to fly. Ferguson landed just before lunch with hydraulic fluid all over his legs after the accumulator had sprung a leak in the cockpit.
- In the evening there was a play in the Hangar - 'The Wind and The Rain' - put on by the (no group name given).
- Oct 7th Maintenance in the morning & Captain's Rounds with gangs of matelots scraping the Hangar & completing the painting thereof. Make & Mend in the afternoon E.N.S.A. show in the evening.
- Oct 8th Six Pilots flew at North Front today and it was intended that they should do ADDL's. However the wind didn't oblige and they practised section attacks, formation & so on instead.
- On the ship there were Divisions on the Flight Deck and several of the Squadron were found quite unshaven! The Captain repeated his speech of last week in telling us why we are fighting the Japanese. He said that on Monday the dock is being filled & that the following day the ship will be anchored off the Mole for refuelling. Monday will be the last day of shore leave. On Wednesday D.L. training will take place & on Thursday or Friday we will set course for Alexandria. Flying will take place during the trip.
- Oct 9th A party of the Squadron troops went to North Front this morning for maintenance work. There was no flying. At 1100 our Pilots assembled in the A.I.R. to hear "Wings". Refuelling is to take place this afternoon. Tomorrow we go out to the Mole to take on petrol & in evening there will be night taxiing practice for 848. Wednesday everyone will do 3 deck landings and there will be the Governor, the Admiral & a large number of WRENS on board to see the fun. There will be a deck park of two TBF's & six Corsair, 4 Corsairs will fly off to North Front & the two TBF's & remaining two Corsairs will be used for D.L.'s. In the evening the ship comes into harbour to put the guests ashore and next day we set off for Alex. There will be flying all the way & in Alex we can expect a weekend of shore leave. The C.O.'s crowd has at last left Cairo!
- Oct 10th Dress of the day was blues and in contrast to the last few days on which the weather has been comparatively cool, it was hot all day! The entire morning was spent in running up Corsairs & TBF's on the Flight Deck. This was mostly done with one a/c at a time & there was much panic when Corsair 7 JIG with the new engine caught alight. Jack Kennedy was all for letting it burn itself out since the fire was caused by the preservative grease on the engine. But the Captian obviously didn't like the idea.

Running up of engines wasn't completed till after tea. We congratulate our harassed Chief for 100% serviceability, 1842 had half a dozen u/s, Night taxiing was cancelled

Oct 11th The visitors came aboard fairly early & the ship put to sea about 9:00 am. Flying off took place about an hour later. S/Lt's Glading and McLisky flew off to North Front while Connolly & Bell (1842) with the two Avengers made an attack on the target towed astern of the Carrier. The Corsairs came in first to strafe (with live ammo for the sake of the visitors) while the Avengers dropped depth charges. All quite alarming. Connolly's strafing was fairly good: Bell's was horrible! One of the Avengers did a practically perfect drop, right on the float.

We waited and waited for Bell & Connolly to land on but they continued circling until a G for George flag was displayed & they left in the direction of Gibraltar. At lunch we discovered the reason for their departure. One of the ships engines has gone u/s. There are wild rumours as to what is the matter & also many, many buzzes as to where we're going! At 1400 we were just outside the harbour & by 1830 the ship was at her berth in Gibraltar. About 1900 all Pilots assembled in the A.I.R. where the Captain gave us his plans. They are, to use the ship with only the serviceable engines running. This will give her a speed of 26 knots in complete calm. Squadrons agreed but on the condition that the Captain must expect the number of prangs to increase. He said he would suggest it to the Admiralty & would have to have his suggestion accepted. He & others doubted that it would be. If it isn't, where are we going?

S/Lt's Brown & Ferguson were at North Front all day & returned in the evening.

Oct 12th An Armourer and a Fitter went to North Front today & S/Lt Brown as well. Otherwise very little happened all day. The Captain gave us three alternatives: 1-We go out East as we are on two screws; 2-We return home and join the Home Fleet, releasing another Carrier for the Far East; or 3-We return home for a 3½ month refit. 'Wings' instead of the Captain flew to England to put these proposals before the Admiralty.

Oct 13th S/Lt's Morten, Glading, Wood, Crosland, Ferguson and Blaikie flew at North Front this morning. All these Pilots had one flight, Glading Ferguson and Blaikie were up twice.

Oct 14th Lt. Gray, S/Lt's Crosland, Maitland and Wood went to North Front with a party of ratings. There wasn't sufficient transport for the troops who turned up half an hour late and only two cabs were serviceable. S/Lt's Maitland and Wood went up in these for an hour or so. 848 were flying & 1842 attacking them. Yesterday we discovered that the ship is staying at Gibraltar to refit - 3½ months!! Horrors.

Oct 15th Divisions in the morning. The most important thing the Captain had to say was that the Avengers and all 848 ratings are going to Alexandria. while 1841 & 1842 remain here though all the a/c will go ashore to North Front. There is no accommodation there and no food!

They are beginning to remove the rivets out of the Flight Deck preparatory to making a large hole which will pass down aft of the keyboard flats.

Oct 16th Troops and Pilots, four of them went to North Front this morning but flying was impossible. The wind was strong & at 90° to the runway & the weather was closing down generally.

The Squadron played a battery of R.A.'s & were beaten 3 - 1, however S/Lt Crosland was u/s which accounts for at least two of our goals!

Oct 17th A party of ratings & five Pilots went on the transport to North Front at 0800. The Officers were S/Lt's Morten, Reeve, Ferguson, Glading and McLisky. S/Lt Maitland followed later by lighter which also brought over an Avenger from the FORMIDABLE. All a/c are supposed to be moved today but the sea is too rough for the small lighters & the whole business will have to be done by the single boat. Six aircraft were serviceable at North Front and section attacks, patrol formation, dogfights and tail chases were organised. The morning hop consisted of over 2 hours flying. In the afternoon six a/c were again serviceable & each Pilot was up for just over an hour. S/Lt's Glading & McLisky jumped 1842 & disorganised them pretty thoroughly. Radio natter from 1842 was worse than horrible!

Spelling?

Interesting to watch S/Lt Butterworth, 1842, flying with LCDR Meiklejohn who was in a Spitfire - rather a teased one. Butterworth was able to keep up with him even in turns & of course dived away from the Spitfire easily.

Oct 18th

Lt Gray and S/Lt's Reeve, Bastion, Humphries and a party of ratings were at North Front all day. To begin with, only three Corsairs were serviceable, the remainder were suffering from minor oil leaks and the like. Lt Gray & S/Lt Reeve were up together first for some section drill while S/Lt Humphries had 45 minutes aerobatics. When the latter had landed, S/Lt Bastion went up in the same Corsair for 45 minutes, also doing aerobatics. After lunch all six Corsairs were serviceable and patrol formation, section attacks & so on were practised. Corsairs are now being taken to North Front by lighter

Half a dozen of the Squadron Officers were invited to the Chiefs and P.O.'s Club & seem to have had someluck at Tombola.

Oct 19th

The last of the Corsairs was lightered off this morning and it's thought that tomorrow will be spent in maintenance & general reorganisation at North Front. The Squadron played at cricket in the morning and the final score for both sides was 114 to 6! We scored our last run on the last ball of the game. The Chief & S/Lt's Morten and Maitland helped the score along.

S/Lt's Brown, Connolly, Ferguson and Harrison flew at North Front this morning. They spent the morning doing section work and patrol formation and in the afternoon Harrison was supposed to jump S/Lt's Brown and Connolly. Being unable to find them, he went off to do aerobatics!

Oct 20th

22 Officers from the FORMIDABLE went to Europa Point to play cricket. 1841 Pilots were much in evidence amongst this crowd. All Squadron Officersexcept S/Lt's Morten & Humphries are to live at North Front permanently from Sunday onwards. About 47 P.O.'s are coming out as well. There is no food or accommodation for the rest of the troops.

Oct 21st

S/Lt's Morten, Harrison, Maitland and Wood went to fly this morning at North Front. They were up for an hour's patrol formation. S/Lt Harrison reported smoke in his cockpit after about  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour's flight and began to return to base. Minutes later he called up & reported zero oil pressure & requesting S/Lt Morten to stand by in case he was forced to ditch. S/Lt Harrison could not be contacted over the radio after this & S/Lt Maitland returned to the field to see whether 7 George, the offending Corsair, had landed. It had. Plenty of oil left too!! S/Lt Connolly also flew from North Front. He was testing his own a/c.

LCDR Jack Kennedy has been organising again! The 36 or so Army nurses on board the USS WISTERIA are coming to the FORMIDABLE for cocktails at 1730. 1841 Subbies to the fore!! Most of the Squadron Officers seem to have found some attachments & there was quite a Yankee type party at the Victoria later!

Oct 22nd

Our trek to North has been delayed for 24 hours. Lt Gray, S/Lt's Crosland, Brown, Blaikie, Humphries and Bastion flew at North Front today. Divisions were held on the Flight Deck. The Captain had nothing much to say except that we probably wouldn't be ready to go till the middle of December.

Oct 23rd

The troops and all the Officers of the Squadron moved to North Front this morning quite early - 0750 to be precise. Billets in the RAF section were dirty but spacious & with the help of some of the Stewards, they soon became habitable. There was no flying. Maintenance continued all day and butt firing of guns. The Armament Section almost destroyed a Halifax! Guns aren't fired into walls of sand or anything like that at North Front! The a/c is pointed out to sea & everything casually squirted off!

The RAF Mess is a sort of Cafeteria system & one dashes about picking up as much as one can - that applies to some people at least. The food seems quite good.

Oct 24th

There was flying this morning. Quarter attack with camera guns in pairs - one Corsair stooging, the other attacking. S/Lt's Morten & Reeve were up together and Glad- ing & McLisky, Maitland & Wood. We hope the results are good. In the afternoon the Squadron played cricket at Alameda Gardens, the Officers vs the troops. The latter made

Spelling?

99 allout & the Officers won by 7 or 8 wickets. S/Lt Blaikie performed rather brilliantly & hit very hard. Tomorrow he should be suffering from water on the knee, judging by one ball he received on that part of his anatomy!

Oct 25th A great deal of flying today. In fact 1841 Squadron "forced on"! Lt Gray, S/Lt's Crosland, Maitland and Wood were up for an hours patrol formation & section attacks & another flight led by S/Lt Ferguson and consisting of S/Lt's Harrison, Glading and McLisky was up at the same time and for the same purpose. Later in the morning S/Lt's Brown, Connolly, Maitland and Blaikie in Green Flight and Lt Gray, S/Lt's Reeve, Humphries and Bastion in Blue flew for an hour doing more attacks and patrol formation.

After lunch half the Squadron Officers went to play cricket against 1842 & the rest did some high altitude flying. The cricket went well: we made 127 for 7 & 1842 were 40 for 5 when the transport arrived to take us back. Much time was spent looking for balls or trying to borrow them from the local Pongos! Lt Gray returned from his high altitude hop early because of radio trouble. S/Lt Wood discovered his Oxygen wasn't working when he was at 20000 and came down followed by S/Lt Humphries who thought he was out of control! Discovering that Wood was O.K., Humphries returned to carry out section attacks at altitude with Bastion. S/Lt's Glading and Brown also went up high for section attacks. They also tried using take-off power & got about 220 knots indicated.

Oct 26th S/Lt's Humphries, Bastion, Brown and Connolly were occupied in doing camera attacks in the morning, while S/Lt's Reeve and Harrison tested their radio with the ship and were then sent off on a direction exercise.

After lunch McLisky was directed by the ship & S/Lt's Wood, Morten, Ferguson, & Harrison went up to 20000' to see whether their Oxygen was in working order and also to see what their patrol formation was like at that altitude. Army Co-operation lectures continued all day.

Oct 27th S/Lt's Reeve, Humphries & Bastion carried out R.T. exercises with the ship. Most of the other Pilots went up in sections to practise camera attacks on each other. People involved were: Lt Gray & S/Lt Crosland - Blaikie & Wood - Ferguson & Harrison - Maitland & Bastion. More Army Co-operation lectures. These are now to do with spotting for artillery & reporting results and corrections in a standardised way.

Oct 28th S/Lt's Morten, Reeve, Brown and Blaikie were up for patrol formation this morning & they were jumped from time to time by S/Lt's Glading & Harrison. S/Lt Maitland was up for an air test in 7 William, which had an engine "surge" in a left hand turn & a "drop" in a right hand turn.

There was a thick haze & flying stopped early. Make & Mend in the afternoon. More Army Co-operation exercises & lectures during the morning. On board ship, the Warrant Officers were the guests of the Wardroom & some members of the Squadron were present. This party ended up in the recognised way - big Rugger match in the Ante-Room. Blood flowed quite freely & the high spot of the evening was a strip tease by W.O. Branch! The rest of the Squadron Officers spent the evening at the 'Rock' where the American Nurses were giving a sort of farewell and thank you party, both at the same time too! This went fairly well, by all accounts.

Oct 29th The Squadron had to be on board this morning for Divisions. Half the Officers turned up in time, the rest missed the first transport & since Divisions were an hour earlier than usual, the show was all over when they did turn up. The Bishop took the sermon for a change. Some of the Officers were inoculated before they returned to North Front

The USS WISTERIA left the jetty at about 1730. We were very sorry, some of us, to see her leaving. She's supposed to be going to Oran.

Oct 30th There was quite a big programme of flying for the morning but in the end only S/Lt McLisky, Blaikie and Ferguson flew. They did a little dive bombing. The ceiling lowered very quickly before lunch and there was a nasty cross wind. More Army Co-operation lectures during the rest of the day.

We heard that 9 Pilots are going to Dekhelia, near Alexandria in the very near future & that others are going to Oran to do some artillery spotting & reporting. The

New Zealanders have decided to put in for leave! With the four members in Ceylon, the N.Z.'s going on leave, nine members at Alex & the rest here or at Oran, the Squadron will almost have been 'disbanded'! It began raining hard after dark.

- Oct 31st Lt Gray's flight are going to Dekhelia & some other members as well. They are: S/Lt's Humphries, Ferguson & Harrison. About 50 ratings as well & that indispensable person, the Chief. Work on the nine a/c chosen to go is now beginning. They are all being thoroughly checked & it is hoped that they will all be ready & test flown by their respective Pilots by midday Friday. The heavy rain which has fallen all day hasn't helped a bit. Lectures continued all day.
- Nov 1st The weather continues wet and cold & work on the Corsairs is held up. More lectures. In the evening there was a big party in the RAF Mess, at which most of the Officers were to be found. Much wine & some women. Rain continues very heavy.
- Nov 2nd Rain, rain, rain. Work goes ahead & the cabs will be ready by tomorrow. Everyone left at North Front will be going to Oran for some time for training in artillery spotting. Lt Hampton Gray's birthday. "Many Happy's Hammy!"
- Nov 3rd There was some dive bombing after lunch & S/Lt Reeve, who was on the RAF Launch, reports that some of the bombs came quite close! S/Lt's Morten, Glading & McLisky went up for a radio test with the battery who are doing a "shoot" with them in the afternoon. The radio worked O.K. in the morning but in the afternoon the Army couldn't hear anything simply because the receiver accumulator had run down! So the afternoon's flying was practically wasted for these three. The nine a/c that are going to Alex are ready now & are to be flight tested by their respective Pilots.
- Nov 4th Aircraft were tested successfully in the morning. The troops are to go aboard a transport tomorrow early & Pilots going to Dekhelia are expected to leave on Monday morning or tomorrow afternoon. Baggage was packed by 1430 and taken to the ship. Late in the evening we heard that the arrangements for the Squadron were cancelled. No reasons given. The ship had a big party which seems to have been a great success.
- Nov 5th None of our Pilots flew except S/Lt's Morten & Bastion who filled in for 1842. All the previous embarkation arrangements were cancelled. Make & Mend in the afternoon.
- Nov 6th Artillery spotting in the morning, S/Lt's Brown, Crosland, Glading and Lt Gray were the Pilots. The latter's engine was cutting & he thought he might have to ditch. However he reached the field safely in the end. There was also a certain amount of dive bombing.
- Nov 7th Many of the troops taking E.T. 1 this morning. Do any of the Officers know the opposite of Hypocrite? Or a synonym for "impassioned"? There was artillery spotting before lunch, and in the afternoon some dive bombing. S/Lt Butterworth flying one of 1842 cabs had to ditch because of engine failure but was fortunately picked up by a launch. At one moment he had 5000 rpm & with the prop control in full coarse, he got about 3000! After which the engine stopped altogether.
- Nov 8th This morning a dozen of the Squadron Pilots went straffing in sections of two. A certain amount of trouble was experienced with some of 1842 guns. A great many of them had stoppages or didn't fire at all! Straffing continued in the afternoon. LCRD Hawkes came over to take arms drill but the rifles failed to appear. It was an ideal day, perfect for flying. An Army Co-operation lecture for 1700 was cancelled at the last moment & Pilots missed their tea at the Capital!
- Nov 9th S/Lt Reeve has managed to borrow one of the Martinets for today and tomorrow. Troops & Pilots watched enthusiastically as he taxied out for take off & more anxiously as he came in for his first landing. He then took up two members of his crew for 15 minute hops. S/Lt Ferguson followed with a solo to begin with & then a couple of dual flights with his ratings as passengers. Unfortunately after lunch the C.O. of 1842 took the a/c & we didn't see it again. There was an Army Co-operation lecture at 0830 which took about 20 minutes at the

most! Dive bombing in the morning and afternoon. Artillery spotting after lunch as well. The chief difficulty seems to be keeping the target in sight, particularly when one is downtown.

Nov 10th A small amount of dive bombing today & some more air testing of the Dekhelia a/c. Very early the troops going to Dekhelia went on board a ship lying in the Bay. They are supposed to be leaving this evening.

S/Lt Crosland celebrated his 22nd birthday in the traditional style at the Capital. At least 13 Pilots were there during the evening, which became quite boisterous.

Nov 11th The Dekhelia party are leaving on Monday morning at 0800, briefing will take place tomorrow at 1000. The trip is expected to take two days if all goes well.

There was a little testing. Strafing was cancelled because of a high wind & rough sea. Too rough for the RAF Launch to go out into the Med. Make & Mend in the afternoon. General exodus of Pilots to the Capital for tea.

The troops are still sitting out on the transport in the Bay!

Nov 12th There was a very small amount of flying this morning mostly test flights. The Dekhelia party went to be briefed at 1000. This consisted mostly of issuing maps and of general information about restricted & semi-restricted areas. The route is North Front to Maison Blanche, Algiers via Cape Fifals & the coast. Then from Maison Blanche to Castel Benito via Bishera, El Assa. We are to be briefed finally at 0645 tomorrow morning & are to take off at 0800. The troops are still in the Bay.

Nov 13th Lt Gray & S/Lt's Connolly, Harrison, Ferguson, Crosland, Humphries, Brown, Wood & Maitland were aroused at the inhuman hour of 0530 in order to have had their breakfast, to have packed up & in fact to be completely ready for briefing at 0645. This didn't take very long and about the only new things learnt were respective Call Signs for each Pilot. The weather was reported completely fair over the route. Pilots were all in their cabs by 0810 & after Sunday small delays started up. S/Lt Maitland kept everyone waiting while his gear was lashed in the back of the fuselage & when he did finally start up, there were loud popping noises from S/Lt Connolly's Corsair! Lt Gray stopped his engine & signalled to everyone else to do the same. The bottom plugs on the offending plane were changed very rapidly & all Pilots started up again. All, that is except S/Lt Humphries, who couldn't get 7 Roger going. We stopped our engines for the second time, S/Lt Connolly's had still been popping cheerfully in spite of the plug change and now Lt Gray's headphones were u/s! All Connolly's gear was removed from 7 Dog to be stowed in 7 Zebra. However since 7 Roger's starter breech had to be changed, it was decided to try a second plug change on 7 Dog, and Lt Gray went off to get someone to look at his headphones. At 1000 we all started up successfully & by 1015 we were airborne & setting course for Maison Blanche, which we reached at 1235. The trip was uneventful. Lt Dunkley, 1842 Squadron was heard very distinctly over the radio as we passed Oran.

At Maison Blanche the runway was made of linked metal strips & this makes a tremendous roar when one is landing & coming to a stop. So much so that several Pilots thought they had broken tailwheels. We had lunch at the Stopping Post - No 72 - and went back to find out about the next leg of our trip. We were told however that it would be dark before we reached Castel Benito if we took off by 1400, so we had to stay the night. We slept at Dakota House, just down the road from the airfield, in Nissen Huts. Double bunks & the sheets hadn't been aired for months & felt thoroughly damp. Four types went into Algiers to see what there was to see, the rest went to bed early. We plan to be up by 0530 tomorrow & to be away by 0730! It's been decided too, to do the rest of the trip to Dekhelia in two hops from Maison Blanche, instead of the two originally planned. This will make up for lost time. It means that from Maison Blanche we fly direct to Marble Arch, which is about 857 nautical miles & will take four hours. Then from Marble Arch to Dekhelia, about 550 n.m. in just over three hours. By which time we will never want to sit on a parachute again! There doesn't seem to be any difficulty about fuel. Providing everyone has 150 Gals. by the time we reach Castel Benito, every thing will be fine.

Nov 14th Another crazy awakening at 0500. Very cold indeed. Breakfast was very welcome,

particularly the hot tea. We were briefed about 0700 & found that everything was O.K. Fine weather all the way & a slight tail wind. S/Lt Maitland was the only member to have difficulty starting & he did so on about the sixth cartridge. No popping engine, no u/s headphones, we were ready to go.

We finally set course about 0815. As far as Castel Benito, there wasn't much of interest to note. The country was as desolate as any of us have ever seen: nothing but sand, sand hills, dried up lakes & so on stretching as far as one could see. Not a sign of life. At Castel Benito, Lt Gray called up to find out how the fuel situation was. Only one person had used up his drop tank & he'd just changed to main a few moments before. "We'll FORCE ON!" said Gray. From Castel Benito onwards, the country was completely desert & here & there we could see bomb craters, tank tracks & trenches, relics of the North African Campaign. We reached Marble Arch at about half-past twelve. Unfortunately the wind was blowing down the one sand runway & we couldn't use the tarmac ones. Lt Gray was the first to land. He sent up clouds of sand & the people following him could see nothing at all! The Tower rang up & told us to circle until it cleared. After this we made sure no one was in front of us before we came in! The sand runway was extremely hard & bumpy & it may have been this that caused S/Lt Humphries tailwheel to burst while he was taxiing in. Wisely he stopped immediately & asked for assistance. Unfortunately the RAF crew towed the a/c in while we were having lunch & there was hardly anything left of the wheel when Humphries went to look at it afterwards. And they hadn't any spares. A tailwheel was expected any day though, so 7 Roger had to await. For the same reason as at Maison Blanche, we had to stay the night at Marble Arch. We wouldn't have been able to reach Dekhelia before dark.

Maison Blanc-Engines were covered for the night in case of a sand storm & we all slept in Nissen e, Algiers Huts & had supper in the RAF Mess. Marble Arch is right out in the desert. All the e, Algiers fresh water has to come 150' every day by road. There were quite a number of ME 110, Marble Arch to 109, J.U. 88, J.U. 87 fuselage's & wings strewn about the field. We all went to bed early. We hope to get off about 1000 tomorrow, leaving 7 Roger & S/L Humphries behind. The trip to Dekhelia should take about 3 hours.

The day's trip: 857 nautical miles in 4.10 hrs.

Nov 15th We did actually leave at 0945 this morning & landed at Dekhelia about 1300. Desert Marble Arch the whole way & a great many more bomb craters, trenches, emplacements, wrecked trans- port & so on to be seen. We passed near & noticed: Fort Capuzzo, El Adem, Tobruk, Bardia, Sollum, Sidi Barrani, Mersa Matruh, El Alemein. Then we saw Alex and the field to Dekhelia, Alex Very short runways, but in spite of this, we were down pretty quickly and no one went round again.

We had something to eat, found out where we were to sleep, got out our suitcases from the Corsairs & went off to chat with 848 types.

The days trip 673 nautical miles in 3.0 hours.

Nov 16th This morning we moved the Corsairs over to our own dispersal by using a 3 ton truck & various pieces of rope. There we covered them up well & locked all controls. We gave ourselves a Make & Mend in the afternoon & went into Alexandria.

Nov 17th We met S/Lt Harry Griffin in Alex last night! He is taking passage on the K.G.V & is their Air Recognition expert.

All propellers were pulled through this morning. Quite a lot of oil appeared in some cases.

Nov 18th More pulling through of propellers today. We were going to run them up this morn- ing but we are to do that on Monday instead.

Nov 19th S/Lt Humphries is still at Marble Arch & no tailwheel has turned up. So last night we took the tailwheel from 7 Dog & this afternoon S/Lt Ferguson is being flown to Cairo West in a Martinet to see that it is flown by DC 3 to Marble Arch. Ferguson reported on his return that the tailwheel would be at Marble Arch either tomorrow morning very early, or the next day. So S/Lt Humphries should be here on Monday or Tuesday. Prop- ellers were pulled through again this morning. Tomorrow we run up.

- Nov 20th We spent the whole morning running the Corsairs up this morning. To all appearances they're still fairly serviceable! After the run up, covers were replaced & controls locked.
- Nov 21st We simply pulled all propellers through this morning & left it at that. A signal has come through saying that the troops are arriving late this evening by train from Port Said.  
At about 1600, we saw a Corsair circling the field. It was of course 7 Roger with S/Lt Humphries at the controls! He'd done the trip in 2½ hours at an average speed of about 310 mph. So at last we have all nine a/c & the troops due in this evening.
- Nov 22nd The troops began their joining routine this morning while S/Lt Humphries started to work out daily routines, duties and general organisation for the Squadron. The troops are all living in tents. After lunch they removed the drop tanks from the a/c, cleaned them & ran them up. The tanks were stowed at the back of the dispersal. Aircraft were covered up for the night. The troops derived great sport from catching lizards & making them race each other on the concrete where they seemed to slip!
- Nov 23rd The Squadron is now divided into three Watches & things are slowly being organised. No work can be done however, until the stores & tool boxes turn up.
- Nov 24th The weather's been getting colder & more miserable during the past days & looks like rain today. Aircraft were cleaned down but very heavy rain stopped practically all work during the morning. It was decided that because of the rain the Squadron should have a Make & Mend. However the stores were supposed to be arriving at the dock & at 1400 a party of 25 with S/Lt Connolly in charge drove down there. The ship wasn't expected in till 1730! The troops received a casual payment in the morning.
- Nov 25th Gear was picked up at the docks at 0830 & most of the morning was spent in unloading the stuff at dispersal & helping the Marine to get his 6 ton truck out of the sand. Officers baggage arrived and the troops began their D.I.'s. S/Lt Brown tested his cab in the morning(7K) - we saw him doing peculiar manoeuvres over the field.
- Nov 26th The troops worked all morning on the a/c & in the afternoon had a Make & Mend. It was very warm all day. The verandah outside the Officer's cabins became a sunbathing parlour and dormitory! A big flying programme which was being arranged for tomorrow has all been cancelled. S/Lt Barrie Brown's birthday. Big P.U.!!
- Nov 27th S/Lt Harrison flew this morning to test 7 George & interest the troops at the same time. After lunch S/Lt's Connolly, Humphries, Wood and Ferguson tested their aircraft & Lt Gray as well. Tomorrow we have some sort of exercise with the K.G.V but don't seem to have any details yet. A signal came through from the ship yesterday saying that we are to have the Pratt & Whitney representative from Cairo to have a look at our engines. The Wright rep. has arrived to look at 848's. 200 ratings from the ship are coming here. We don't know the reason for this. The Squadron office is rapidly being organised. We now have a very exclusive notice board with all sorts of attachments stuck on, including a small tin for chalk! The troops are being issued with khaki battledress tomorrow afternoon.
- Nov 28th S/Lt Maitland flew 7 Able for an hour's test flight this morning. Able has just had a 40 hour inspection. S/Lt Crosland also tested 7 Charlie.  
This afternoon's big "balbo" wasn't nearly as interesting as we thought it would be. Eight Pilots went up in sections; Red, Blue, Yellow & White. They flew out to the K.G. V & the F.D.O. on board vectored each section out & then brought it back. This was repeated several times. Instead of telling the Corsairs to circle the ship to begin with, the F.D.O. requested two sections to go to the East & two to the West. When this request had been carried out, he then vectored everyone out again, with the result that Yellow section got lost & none of the others were very sure where they were! Yellow section eventually had to tell the ship where it was while White, Blue and Red returned to the ship. After this initial muddle, the exercise went off satisfactorily. Pilots took to beating the ship up as they came in on their vectors & before going home. Everyone came in together, some dive bombing, some straffing. A great deal of cloud made the exercise more interesting.



- Nov 29th This morning we tried a new sort of "shoot". It was shadow firing. A section going off into the desert carefully avoiding main roads & herds of camels! One member ~~flies along at right angles to the sun while the other shoots at his shadow.~~ Most people found that the 'line' was the hard thing to judge. Many camels were seen but none were shot - we hope! Two sections went up in the morning & two in the afternoon. The field now had a V.H.F. set working spasmodically. Our notice board comes along well; it is now black all over & signs are being painted on it in white. There's also a big freshwater project in the offing!
- Nov 30th A Baltimore played with some of the types during the morning. S/Lt's Humphries & Harrison & later Maitland & Wood used their camera guns on it. This was repeated after lunch by S/Lt's Ferguson & Wood. They also fired off their guns in the desert. 7 Baker has fired 400 rounds from each gun with one recharge!
- S/Lt's Connolly & Brown went up to 25000' & were directed by the K.G. V They reached 35000 at one stage & while going through some Cumulus cloud encountered very severe icing conditions, heavy coats forming all over the windshield & leading edges.
- The Squadron sent a Soccer team to play at the Olympic Stadium in Alex after lunch. The pitch was full size & grass - a great improvement after GREBE's pitch & North Front. The Squadron combined for better than usual but the forwards shooting was poor & the result was a draw 1 - 1. Our opponents were from the Guardian.
- Dec 1st Plenty of work done today, but no flying. Belly tanks were fitted to all nine Corsairs. The Armament Section worked hard during the rest of the day & in all belted about 10000 rounds of ammunition. Some of the boxes brought from the Station Armoury were completely rotten & the rounds could be broken in half with ease.
- E.N.S.A. produced a show in the evening. It wasn't arranged at all well & didn't come up to the standards of the previous one.
- Dec 2nd The ten ratings selected to "stand-by" yesterday finally left at 0700 this morning. Transport drivers said they hadn't been informed what time they had to be ready & eventually after 'transport' had been phoned four times, they turned up an hour late. 848 had ten troops as well & an Observer in charge. There were two trucks available - one for stores and the other for both Squadrons. That is 20 men & one Officer in a 3 ton truck for a desert journey of 200 odd miles & no seats at all!
- Ammunition was belted during the morning and after lunch, all except the Armament Section had a Make & Mend. Another 10000 rounds belted. All Corsairs are serviceable except 7 King which has a cracked exhaust pipe. The only Welder on the Station isn't available - he's mending someone's Walrus, that secret weapon! So we have to wait till tomorrow.
- The Squadron is apparently going to Gambit for a miniature strike against targets on Crete with as many TBF's as are serviceable. We leave on Monday morning about 1000. All this has been picked up despite the "thick blanket of secrecy" which covers the whole operation!
- Dec 3rd The Squadron fell in at 0900 this morning for Divisions at 0930. Rear Admiral Tennant pays the Station a visit. He was introduced to each Squadron as a whole. His first question was "What's the crew of a Corsair?"..... To 848, "Do all these men fly?" Out of 848 & 1841, there are two R.N. types: one 2½ & a 2 ringer. The Admiral's next question: "Are these men Active Service or Hostilities Only?" We wonder what he meant!
- The troops cleared up Dispersal & secured all a/c. Make & Mend the rest of the day.
- Dec 4th We heard at Divisions yesterday that our intended operation is off. The CinC Med doesn't think the target is worthwhile. There is a great deal of rain during the night and showers all day. S/Lt's Humphries, Crosland and Connolly, with Lt Gray leading, climbed to 25000' to do a little patrol formation & use up the fuel in their belly tanks. They returned in heavy rain.
- Dec 5th The ten troops who had set out to Gambit in the trucks returned to the fold last night. Now there's a great deal of line-shooting about "desert time". From some accounts it's a wonder the whole party weren't blown up by landmines!

It rained in the morning & there were many thunderheads about & some lightning. After lunch however, & just before as well, two sections took off to do attacks on a formation of Avengers. After the exercise the latter said we came too close which we wouldn't have done if the turrets had been firing. This is a good thing however since camera films always show us too far away!

Dec 6th

Three sections took off at 0930 for a navigation exercise. This consisted of 5 legs; the first on a track of 044(T) for 32', next 031(T) for 70', then to Masura, to Ganta & home. A trip of about 350' in all. Sections took off at roughly 10 minute intervals. S/Lt Wood in 7 Baker had engine trouble after take off & returned. Everyone found they were well to the East of Base at the end of the trip. The last three legs were carried out at zero feet.

After lunch, S/Lt's Brown & Connolly went cloud flying. Today's Soccer match was cancelled owing to all fields being u/s.

Dec 7th

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GHT CRUISER  
PENELOPE  
echusa Class

There was a further navigation exercise for those who didn't complete it yesterday. Just about the same trouble was experienced (we believe) though perhaps results were better than the first attempt! In the afternoon, three sections of Corsairs flew out with a flight of Avengers to do a combine torpedoe & dive bombing attack on HMS LIRIUS. This went quite well, though we were late attacking & were diving down at the same moment that the TBF's were dropping their fishes! We finished up with a strafing attack. The ship seemed to enjoy it & took avoiding action.

A moderately tiddely formation on the way back over the field was broken by the Avengers peeling off, almost into us! S/Lt Maitland dropped a wing on landing but went round again & no harm was done.

The troops - some of them - are going to Cairo for the weekend. There's also a Soccer match tomorrow in town.

Dec 8th

One section was to do shadow firing but there wasn't any sun this morning so they went to 20000' to find some clouds. Lt Gray & S/Lt Humphries were attacking a Baltimore & when they'd finished S/Lt's Ferguson & Harrison carried on the good work.

An exercise with the Avengers was called off. We were to attack them while they were doing A.L.T.'s. Instead, S/Lt's Ferguson & Humphries flew at high speed to Cairo to see the pyramids & back again going aerobatics on the way. S/Lt Wood did some cloud flying & followed the other two sight-seers. Lt Gray & S/Lt Brown had an hour's aerobatics.

The weekend party went off to Cairo. 1841 Soccer IX were beaten by HMS MARNE (Destroyer) - bad show! Poor shooting, once again.

Dec 9th

Two sections went shadow firing this morning and many camels were scared stiff! One section attacked a Baltimore. We seem to have a plague of cracked & broken exhaust pipes & unfortunately we have no spares. Thus both 7 King and 7 Able are u/s for the time being.

A Martinet pranged just before lunch. It made a very long landing & overshot, quite naturally since there was hardly any wind & the a/c was approaching very fast. No one hurt.

One or two of the Seafire Squadrons arrived in the afternoon & evening. Just Pilots, no a/c as yet. It looks as if we'll all have to get up early for breakfast if we want any!

Dec 10th

The Squadron did not attend Divisions in the morning, instead crews worked hard a maintenance & the Officers - some of them - worked hard at making the skeet range safe for all & sundry. Others worked at water projects & still others slept! After lunch, maintenance continued and Officers, still in search of water, started digging enormous holes in the sand behind the Dispersal. Results: revolting smells & filthy looking salt water!!

Dec 11th

Two sections went off to make section attacks on Ventura's flown by the RAF. These played fair with us & we were able to make runs from the same side to begin with. Later

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they began to take evasive action & sections split up to bracket the bomber. S/Lt Humphries flew 7 Roger on a test flight after it's 40 hour. It's u/s now with mag trouble. In the afternoon there was some skeet shooting & a lecture by one of the Army types. We are going to have a bombardment shoot on Thursday next.

Dec 12th We had a big low altitude navex this morning: our weekend of hard maintenance having born fruit - 100% serviceability today. Three sections set course at short intervals. The trip was as follows: 41 miles on 033(Track(T), 2nd leg 81 miles on 129(T), 3rd 62' on 230(T), 4th 70' on 309(T) & to Dekhelia, 20' on 055(T). The exercise was more successful than last time though Red Section(Maitland & Wood, particularly the former), seem to have done some good cooking. S/Lt Maitland failed to "cook" his landing, however, & porpoised nicely ala Bastion.

We were to have flown in the afternoon & practiced our R.T. code with Captain Jackson, who is doing this bombardment spotting instruction with us. However a sudden storm came up & sand began to fly around, so that flying was cancelled.

Definite news from S/Lt Glading, who is now at Oran, about S/Lt McLisky. 7 Zebra was flying in formation near the Rock when his engine went haywire. It seems to have been the same trouble as Butterworth's but no one had any definite gen on the cause. The highlight of this news was the ditching of a Martinet by S/Lt Bell, 1842, with S/Lt Bastion in the back seat. We understand that he has refused to fly in one of those "F---- things" again.

Dec 13th Three sections flew this morning to practise their bombardment R.T. procedure with our portable set in the Office & to make good use of the clouds all around Dekhelia. Some Seafires were up but apart from one or two gentle sallies, no one started anything serious. S/Lt Spencer was on the runway to ADDL people in.

The shoot is on for tomorrow & the Radiomen have been working hard to get a suitable frequency for us to contact the guns. The first cab is to be off by 0800! Lt. Gray! We expect to be up for between 2 & 3 hours. We hope all is going to go well.

Dec 14th The bombardment shoot was held today about 17 miles along the Suez Road from Cairo & all went well. The radio from the guns wasn't very strong at times & some members had difficulty hearing. S/Lt Maitland's transmitter was off the correct frequency & he couldn't contact the guns at all. After lunch he returned for a second shoot & this time was successful. Everyone seems to have done quite well & though Captain Jackson sent each Pilot short messages of congratulation after his respective shoot was complete we have yet to hear our mistakes & shortcomings. On the whole, however, it does seem to have gone pretty well.

Lt Gray was off at 0800 this morning & the last a/c back landed about 1530.

Dec 15th This morning we attacked the Furious again. She had a V.I.P. aboard & S/Lt Brown claims to have made him duck when straffing attacks were taking place. We carried out two dive bombing attacks, one up-sun & the other down-sun & two straffing runs. There was a certain amount of cloud about which helped us a great deal. The ship seemed to enjoy as much as last time.

After lunch two sections went off for a low level Navex which was quite successful as far as can be determined. A Corsair had to take a wave off because of Seafires taxiing back up the duty runway. Two Seafires nearly collided this morning for the same reason!

An impromptu Peter Uncle operation began and ended in the Wardroom this evening, 1841 Squadron figuring extensively.

Dec 16th Big operation this morning for those sufficiently recovered from last night's hard work. A flight of Avengers are to attack the AJAX. We(four sections) are escorting them out & dive bombing the ship. There are to be eight Seafires intercepting us. Unfortunately 879 Squadron could only spare four a/c for interception, so we split up the Corsairs into two flights, one to escort the Avengers, the other to do a dive bombing attack on its own. This latter flight did two attacks on a Destroyer by mistake before being seen by the Seafires. The other Corsair flight didn't see the section of

Seafires until they had begun their run. However Blue section had a good shot at them before they reached the Avengers. Red section timed their dive bombing very nicely but ~~Blue section after pursuing the Seafires were a little late & came in just after the~~ Avengers had dropped. About this time, one of the Seafires had sprung an oil leak & was being sent home by his section leader. Almost immediately he rang up & said his oil pressure was zero & his engine had cut. He was told to bale out & did so practically over the AJAX. He was picked up within ten minutes with a circuit of interested Corsairs & Avengers watching the proceedings. Corsairs carried out some straffing attacks after this & then returned. The V.I.P. on the SIRIUS yesterday was very pleased with our performance & wondered why the ship still had any radio aerials left! S/Lt Ferguson has appeared again after a day or two in Sick Bay.

Dec 17th Six a/c went shadow firing in the desert this morning with 100 rounds in each gun, firing them in pairs in order to discover stoppages & so on. More difficulty contacting Shell-mex today and the Duty Watch will have to come back after lunch to fill up & put up the tent behind the dispersal. This is for Major Barber & Lt Phillips, who are due to arrive very soon.

There was a game of football in the afternoon between the Squadron on the Station football pitch, which has just become serviceable. Our estimation is that it should have remained u/s!

Dec 18th More dive bombing this morning on two Destroyers, with a Submarine looking on. Our six Corsairs finished up with a couple of straffing runs & then all Pilots were given a map reference to fly to at low level. Just before lunch, LCDR Hall R.N. who has returned from the Far East, gave us a talk on the sort of formations used by the FAA in the Pacific. Avengers, Hellcats & Corsairs seem to be the most extensively used a/c. Formations I, II & III are used & Formation IV which is what we've always used for straffing - flights line abreast. The Corsair seems to be very popular & is admitted to be superior to the Hellcat in every way, and to the Seafire in everything except climb & speed at low level. It's used for escort, straffing & bombing. The bombing is done with wheels up & in a 45° dive. We'll have to change our technique! Fleet Carriers work together & each send up a certain number of fighters & bombers, all of whom fly together. It's therefore very necessary for everyone to know their formations. Very little air opposition seems to be encountered, but out of a group of 14 Oscars picked up on one occasion, 7 were shot down for the loss of a Corsair & a Hellcat. LCDR Hall said that spare a/c were available in numbers, but not spare parts. We must see how much we can "acquire" in the way of spares!

After lunch one flight flew to try out formation IV & then did some cloud flying.

Dec 19th Four aircraft went shadow firing this morning but patches of sun were hard to find. However both sections returned with guns practically empty. Lt Gray & S/Lt Crosland discovered a wrecked tank in the desert & the "Lootenant" claimed four direct hits during his dive bombing attacks.

S/Lt Harrison went into town to see about the Squadron party & to deliver a book to Captain Jackson. Results of our bombardment shoot arrived. They all seem to be very successful & the remarks most complimentary. S/Lt Wood took 8 minutes over his shoot, half as long as anyone else, & S/Lt Connolly "judges distance so well that he is able to dispense with normal ranging procedures"! Major Barber & Captain Phillips arrived in the evening.

Dec 20th Four types went dive bombing in the desert in the morning. They tried the new technique with wheels up & no steeper angle than 45° and afterwards went straffing - shadow firing being quite out of the question. There was a great deal of cumulus & showers about. The bombing seemed quite successful. Targets used were wrecked tanks & transports in the desert. They were afterwards strafed.

The Squadron played 848 at soccer in Alex. Rather to our own surprise & certainly to theirs, we won 4 - 0!! Forwards played well together & apart from Wright fumbling once or twice - the ball was extremely slippery - the defence was very sound. "Big Victory". We'll obviously be challenged for a return.

Four Officers went to El Alamein for a tour of the battlefields. They didn't have a good day for it and returned disappointed & very sore from their bumping in the Squadron 3 tonner!

Dec 21st We should have had six a/c for a low altitude Navex, which Major Barber & Captain Phillips have organised for us. They are now encamped in a tent of their own just behind dispersal & next to the Chief's. Unfortunately only four a/c were serviceable. Weather was pretty bad & it had rained heavily during the night.

There was to have been some dive bombing after lunch, but it was cancelled because of bad weather. Tomorrow the C.B.A.L.O.'s have organised a pinpoint exercise for every one & a low altitude Navex for those who didn't do it this morning.

Dec 22nd The exercises planned yesterday were carried out today. They all went fairly well, though most Pilot's observations of turning points & pinpoints weren't accurate enough. However, this will improve with practice.

All Watches returned after lunch to secure a/c & fuel them. We aren't doing any more flying till Tuesday Dec. 26th. Squadron party comes off tonight. Pilots have been putting in some quiet practice.

Dec 23rd Last night's party went pretty well and the dinner produced at the Baudroe - opposite the Chief's & P.O.'s Club in Alex, was excellent. Supper was followed by odd songs, recitations and fun & games in general, including a big session of Tombola. The Squadron band also performed from time to time during the evening. The party came to an end about 2330. After much shouting & disorganisation, all the troops got into the trucks, each with his bottle of beer, and we set off for home, swaying, shouting & singing. It is to be regretted that a large iron "PARK" sign, which had been loaded on one truck, was seen by a Wog policeman who told us to put it back. It would have looked nice outside Dispersal.

All the Corsairs were run up this morning except 7 How & 7 Baker. The former had Mag trouble & the latter has a damaged flap. They were then secured and covered, and the Duty Watch returned to their tents.

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

Dec 24th The Squadron attended Divisions in the morning and Church afterwards. All Squadron Pilots went ashore in the evening.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY

Dec 25th The first surprise of a most surprising day was the appearance in the Wardroom of S/Lt Peter Smith, 848 Squadron, equipped with rattle, palm leaf & fez and riding a small donkey led by a little Wog. He insisted on pouring Brandy from his flask into the donkey's ears, but later repented and fed the wretched creature on carrots. The bar was open in the Wardroom about 1130 & a little later all Pilots repaired to the Chiefs & P.O.'s Mess, where they were treated to beer and "Tots". The place was very gaily decorated, completely crowded & gradually becoming merrier & merrier. Finally everyone Chiefs, P.O.'s, Flight Sergeants and all straggled to the Wardroom. There was a scene of vibrant activity, flowing liquor & much happiness. A piano had magically appeared between the Ante-room and Wardroom, & the maestro of our Squadron, P.O. Guy, was playing away happily. Moments later a Jeep rolled up to the piano & the Flight Sergeant of 848 stood on it's bonnet & was just about to give us a song when it backed out again. From here onwards, events, at least to the diarist, seemed completely vague! Lt Gray was seen dashing from the Wardroom with his paper hat in flames, someone was producing horrible squeaks from a Clarinet & there were Wrens all over the place. Outside by the football pitch, strange figures appeared & every truck was covered with human beings. This is the diarist's last recollection, he appeared again later in a dressing gown for supper & stayed like that until bedtime.

Lt Gray, S/Lt's Humphries & Harrison went to visit the troops in their tents. It's not known exactly what happened to Gray & Harrison, but Humphries performed some brilliant palm tree climbing in search of his own shoes. The rigger match in progress on the submerged soccer pitch was short and sweet & consisted mostly of many figures floundering in the mire. The Chief reports that every now and then a pair of Wogs would

pick up a recumbent figure, cart it on to dry land & pump the water out. Apparently the runways were a mass of moving trucks since everyone thought the rigger game was to be held on the field by the Seafire's dispersal. However, there was a soccer game already in progress there.

The rigger game fizzled out eventually & everyone toddled off to bed or to their Christmas dinners. Squadron Pilots did some classy singing in the Wardroom in the evening.

Thus ended Christmas Day, 1944. A Most Astonishing Day!

#### BOXING DAY

Dec 26th Four brave members flew this morning & they were airborne before the Avengers. No Seafires flying at all. The afternoon was spent in maintenance. Tomorrow we have a big programme of Tac R & pinpoint exercises combined with dive bombing. Briefing at 0800 for all Pilots.

Dec 27th The first exercise this morning was a sort of Navex(Tac R) and pinpoint exercise. This was followed by a dive bombing practice by one flight and dummy straffing attacks by the other. Very fortunately a long convoy was passing along the Cairo road at the time, so Yellow flight led by S/Lt Brown had plenty to do.

The next effort consisted of a Tac/R exercise by one flight, with the second flight intercepting them. Only one section of the Tac/R group was observed by the Fighter Patrol. S/Lt Brown then took his flight to dive bomb.

Maintenance in the afternoon. Two cabs, 7 Roger & 7 Baker are u/s after having collided with birds. 7 Roger needs a new cowling for the engine. 7 Baker has had to have a big repair job done on it's Starboard mainplane.

Dec 28th The field was u/s today because of heavy rain during the night. All members were up by 0800 for a lecture, which was cancelled!! There was no flying during the day. Some Radio procedure was practiced during the morning & Captain Jackson gave a short lecture on the new bombardment code.

Maintenance continued during the afternoon.

Dec 29th The exercise carried out this morning were Tac/R with one flight intercepting, dive bombing and just before lunch, the reconnaissance of an Army convoy & low level attacks on it. Pilots found that it was extremely difficult to distinguish between one vehicle and another from 8000'. About 4000' and below, one could make out the difference between tank and truck. The ground was undulating and afforded good cover for low level attacks. Maintenance during the afternoon.

Dec 30th It rained all day today and there was no flying at all. The Duty Watch had to be called out after lunch to resecure all our Corsairs. A strong warm wind had sprung up bringing rain & sand from the desert. Visibility was very poor. A Make & Mend for all

Dec 31st Four Pilots flew this morning. They did some Tac/R & observed pinpoints they had found. Messages were dropped to the C.B.A.L.'s on their return. Three of these Pilots also took part in dive bombing. Make & Mend in the afternoon. "Force on" into Alex!!

1945

Jan 1st Very sensibly the whole Squadron had a Make & Mend in the morning to recover from the previous evenings celebration. After lunch maintenance began & carried on till 1600. 848 Squadron have a dance this evening to which all 1841 Squadron have been invited.

Jan 2nd Seven a/c were up this morning. Two sections observing the targets which we are using for tomorrow's shoot, dropping messages to the C.B.A.L.'s and dive bombing. Lt Gray & S/Lt's Crosland and Humphries followed the first two sections but didn't dive bomb. 7 Fox had a flat tailwheel after landing & the troops wheeled a jack out & fitted a new one just off the runway. The Air Watch had their fingers well out & rang up to tell us there was a Corsair on the runway about five minutes after 7 Fox had come to a standstill!

LCDR gave us an amusing & instructive talk on spotting. We learnt a good deal from his experiences in Normandy & the Aegean. Pilots will now be in an almost continual state of black-out! Vicious twists, turns & dives!

Jan 3rd

The shoot went off this morning according to the programme. Difficulties encountered were bad communications in the majority of cases, and the large proportion of **unobserved rounds. These were A.P. shells & didn't explode like H.E.** giving a good cloud of sand as they burst. Captain Jackson however, seemed pretty satisfied about it all. He admitted that the guns were A.A. guns & therefore not too accurate on ground shooting.

The Squadron played 848 Sqdn in the afternoon & were beaten 3-2! Thanks to our solid defence, the score wasn't about 7-0! There is to be a deciding match very soon.

Maintenance continued throughout the afternoon & D.I.'s were carried out.

Jan 4th

There was a low level Navex & pinpoint exercise before lunch today in the general direction of El Alamein where the pinpoints were situated. Incidentally, there is to be a big exercise over Alamein in the very near future. Seven a/c took part & four of these went dive bombing afterwards.

In the afternoon Pilots went to the tank depot South of the Air Station & were shown several different types of A.F.V. and some Sherman tanks.. Towards the end of the afternoon, Squadron Officers were driving the Sherman's about. Great manual labour required to change gear!

Jan 5th

S/Lt's Connolly & Maitland went off on a Tac/R exercise this morning but found the situation rather unfavourable. There was a very strong wind & as usual Air Watch hadn't a clue as to the direction or strength. In addition, sand was rising up to 2000' and visibility was very poor. Other Pilots tried their hands at bombing in the desert but the strong wind didn't help at all. We didn't fly at all in the afternoon because of the sand & the Avengers followed suit. There were some Seafires up after lunch.

E.N.S.A. show in the evening.

Jan 6th

The Alamein exercise came off this morning with quite a number of spectators watching the proceedings, including a Brigadier. None of these people realise how close they came to 'death'. The spectators gallery was almost mistaken for the target & eight of our Pilots with all their switches made & guns charged were itching to press the magic button.

The exercise consisted of escorting the Avengers to the target area - from the sea & then a straffing attack on various special targets. We had two sections on the Port & Starboard quarters, the flights weaving between each other. The Avengers then went in to bomb - pretty accurately - with 500 lb bombs. We then vectored with the Avengers and landed. This sort of thing went on all day, Seafires were there if we or the Avengers weren't. We went back after lunch with bombs and loaded guns. After several attempts, the straffing party did finally fire at the right tank! The bombers produced a very nice little group, but it wasn't anywhere near the target.

The spectators liked our morning's performance! Most of the Squadron didn't!

Jan 7th

We meant to do attacks on the Avengers this morning but they disappeared out to sea & the flight who were to be the attackers were bounced by S/Lt Crosland instead. That's about all that happened during the day. Make & Mend in the afternoon.

Jan 8th

Today the whole Squadron were requested to look for mines along the coast to the West. The result was the discovery of a possible three and one torpedoe. Subsequently Mr Brown was deluged with questions about rewards for salvaging torpedoes. We were ready to send some troops along in a truck when we heard it was only £10, most of our enthusiasm disappeared! There was some shadow firing during the morning, some practice in reading "strip" code and some message dropping.

Jan 9th

Two flights went up this morning, both to do some patrol formation & one to do some low level bombing as well. This turned out to be very accurate and several direct hits were scored on the wrecked Avro Anson we all know so well. Just before lunch everyone took off & did five ADDL's before the troops packed up & we all went home.

We seem to have several a/c unserviceable at the moment. Maintenance went on during the afternoon. Pilots heard a lecture on ArmyCo-op in Burma by F/Lt

Jan 10th The C.B.A.L.'s had a new sort of exercise for us this morning. It was a Reconnaissance of some of the big fields within a radius of about 90 miles. Each Pilot was allotted three fields & he had to return with as much information about each as he possibly could. All this from a height of between 4000' and 6000'. The exercise seems to have been fairly well done but Pilots differed quite a lot as to numbers of a/c on respective fields. It's claimed there were a number of Corsairs at Cairo West but there was only one report of this. Don't we know what the wretched thing looks like yet?

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NEWFOUNDLAND?Cruiser. After lunch six a/c escorted the Avengers out for an A.L.T. attack on a Fiji Class ship just before the Avengers came in. Both bombing sections were too early. There were two Seafires patrolling at 4000' - we were at 6000' - and we all saw them before the Avengers deployed. Yellow section - S/Lt's Connolly & Brown - dealt with these enemy fighters. Two bombing runs were made & one dummy straffing run. Things got a bit disorganised at this stage, but we eventually formed up & returned to base.

Jan 11th The four Pilots who didn't do airfield reconnaissance yesterday went off to do it this morning. They seem to have done the job quite successfully but hang a man who can't even find Heliopolis\*!

/Lt Crosland we fear!! Other Pilots went off to look for mines along the coast West of Alamein. One or two mines were certainly found & a torpedoe is claimed as well. In addition, a large & miscellaneous collection of tin cans, oil drums, logs, boilers and so on were reported. It's amazing what one can find by looking.

N.A.II Thomas retracted the tailwheel on 7 How after lunch, with resulting damage to the doors. Everyone knows how urgent it is to rid ourselves of 7 How, but this was a very crude effort!

Jan 12th This morning resulted in a terrific shambles over the NEWFOUNDLAND! We had eight a/c up, four with bombs and four without. Those without were to go in first and strafe, followed closely by the dive bombers. The Avengers were to follow them with a torpedoe attack. We were supposed to join up with 848 somewhere near the field, escort them out and then carry out this combined attack. We never found them and the result was utter confusion! One section went off by itself to strafe and was just pulling out when both Pilots saw six or seven Beaufighters coming in on opposite course! The same section and S/Lt Brown in 7 King were making a second attack from the same direction when the Beaufighters came in from the Starboard beam firing live R.P. at the towed target!! Even the NEWFOUNDLAND's F.D.O. developed twitch at that stage. The dive bombers dropped their practice bombs fairly accurately & carried out straffing attacks.

Over the ship, dogfights were taking place almost continuously between Seafires & Corsairs. There also seemed to be a number of Egyptian Hurricanes stooging about and of course we did see the Avengers making their attacks. The F.D.O. on the ship thanked the Seafires very heartily & said they'd enjoyed the exercise! Quite a thrill for them

We now have two motorbikes for the Squadron. Pilots were busy checkin' out during the afternoon. Lt Gray has a great respect for the motorbike!

Jan 13th Two members did some low level bombing this morning. They and about six others were supposed to do a ground support exercise with the C.B.A.L.'s. They went out to the West of the field with a radio tender. The idea was to fly over them, be given a target & having identified it, to make an attack. However, Pilots couldn't contact the radio truck, and the exercise was cancelled.

Make & Mend in the afternoon.



Jan 14th

Two flights went bombing - dive & low level - this morning. They used the wrecked Avro Anson as target & were more or less inaccurate! After lunch ~~Lt Gray & two~~ ~~S/Lt's~~ Lt Gray & two ~~✱~~ Pilots repeated the morning's exercise & the Lt claimed a direct hit low level. The motorbikes are still a source of amusement to all & sundry. We even see S/Lt Wood screaming down the runway, his head just reaching over the handlebars. Lt Gray also claims he has mastered his iron monster.

7 Baker after having been u/s for some time, broke it's own distributor into little pieces while the engine was being run up this afternoon. Big maintenance job ahead. Rumours of the ship coming soon & that we're stopping flying on Tuesday.

Jan 15th

Three flights went dive and low level bombing today and S/Lt's Crosland & Harrison did the same thing only as a section. S/Lt's Brown and Connolly did five or six ADDL's each. The wind was very strong which gave one the impression of a ship moving, but unfortunately it was very bumpy, which didn't help matters.

(7 George, driven by S/Lt Harrison, nearly blew itself up on the runway before lunch. One of the practice bombs fell off & exploded on the concrete runway. Damage wasn't enormous though - a dent in the fuselage & a strip torn out of one elevator.

Jan 16th

The Squadron carried out the same exercise as yesterday; three flight going to dive bomb the wrecked Anson at Wadi El Natrum & trying some low level bombing as well. The RAF types from Burma tell us that we should dive slightly from about 1500' straffing on the way & drop our bombs about 100'. So we've been trying this out. S/Lt's Humphries, Wood, Harrison & Ferguson ~~went~~ did half a dozen ADDL's after their bombing hop in the afternoon.

We hear that there's a big attack coming off soon on a certain Fleet Carrier! Friday is D-Day!

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*This diary was maintained by S/Lt Alan Maitland, a Pilot of 1841 Squadron (as ordered to do so by LCDR(A) Richard Bigg-Wither, the Commanding Officer of 1841) and continued until he was shot down and lost over Japan*

January 17th Maintenance continued all day. 7 Baker went for a test flight in the afternoon - S/Lt Wood flying the a/c. Tomorrow we are all doing a number of A.D.D.L.'s. There was some rain during the morning & it was overcast practically the whole time.

January 18th More maintenance today & in the afternoon everyone except Lt Gray whose experienced eye watched carefully from the runway, went up to do five or six A.D.D.L.'s. The standard was quite high & Spencer seemed to be quite pleased, for a change!

January 19th Briefing with 848 for this afternoon's attack on H.M.S. FORMIDABLE at 1240. We're doing straffing attacks and dive or low level bombing, depending on the cloud level, before the Avengers go in. S/Lt Humphries in 7 Roger is taking off after us & will take photographs.

We rendezvoused with the Avengers and set course for the ship. Blue flight, led by S/Lt Ferguson weaving in front of the Avengers, & Red flight, Lt Gray, above and astern. Red flight were bombing, Blue straffing. Ten minutes or so before we attacked, four Corsairs appeared slightly higher and to Port of the formation. Blue flight attacked first and took shots at all the attackers. These seemed to be a mixture of 1842 & 1841 Corsairs. Dogfights followed & finally Lt Gray ordered us back to our weaving positions. The low level bombers went in first before the straffers but everyone had finished their attacks before the Avengers came in. Red flights low level bombing was quite good but their dive bombing was rather wild. Considering they only saw the ship at about 3000', it wasn't so surprising. Blue flight made several further straffing runs. There were any number of Corsairs about from the ship itself & when we left we flew past a Squadron formation of about 15 of them. FORMIDABLE had a deck park of half a dozen Seafires. Tomorrow some Seafire Pilots are being flown in to fly these off. They will be going in some of 848's Avengers. S/Lt Spencer was over the ship in a Seafire. We couldn't make out at first what that Seafire was meant to be doing! S/Lt Humphries never found us but the camera wasn't working anyway, so it didn't matter much.

January 20th This morning we carried out a B.S.\* exercise over the ship flying a fairly close formation there & back. Mostly Vics and formation II. Unfortunately it was extremely rough in the air today. The ships' quite close now & one can hear their radio(R.T.) very clearly when over Dekheila.

\*Bullshit

While taxiing round past 848 back to dispersal, 7 Charlie, S/Lt Crosland, ran into the back of the Squadron truck & cut the back to pieces. P.O. Guy, the driver, had stopped at the Duty Runway and had just directed Lt Gray past the obstruction. Crosland didn't see him or the truck in time. Guy has a bad cut in his skin made by a splinter, but very fortunately there was no one else in it. Damage to 7 Charlie is a badly bent prop which will have to be changed, but his engine seemed to be O.K.

Lt Dunkley 1842 landed in 9 Fox, had lunch here & left for the ship. Rumours of us doing some D.L.T.'s but these were knocked on the head by Lt Gray after a talk with LCDR Percy.

January 21st Unexpectedly there was a big programme for this morning & we were late getting off. We thought the ship would have been in harbour. How wrong we were! We were so late that we didn't see the Avengers at all until they were actually attacked by the ship's Corsairs. At this point we heard someone calling up & reporting that two aircraft had collided. The Avengers circled the spot where they went into the drink & a Destroyer rushed up at full speed. Nothing could be found. We wandered about not quite knowing what to do and eventually the ship called up & told us to go back to Dekheila. The ship's Corsairs also flew to Dekheila & landed, most of

Bullshit  
No idea what went on

them with unlocked tailwheels, so that we had a very large park of a/c outside our dispersal & felt we could be on equal terms with the Seafires. All our Pilots landed there except S/Lt Glading and McLisky, who were left on the ship doing their Watches. Lt. Dunkley and S/Lt Railton, 1842 Squadron were the two Pilots who collided, Dunkley's a/c cut to bits up to the cockpit by Railton's prop; the latter baled out but his 'chute became tangled in the tailplane. Dunkley's 'chute didn't spread. We believe that it had been cut to ribbons before he got out.

After lunch LCDR Garland led half the ship's Corsairs off to land on; the rest stayed behind to be refueled. When this had been done they took off, led by Lt Chipperfield. Twenty minutes later they returned & we guessed there had been a prang on deck. Lt Chipperfield had hit the rounddown, knocked off the undercarriage & gone over the Port side in a mass of flames. The ship sailed in just before tea & the Pilots who had landed here went off to go aboard as soon as she arrived.

#### A very Black Day.

- January 22nd Stores went off to the ship this morning. All baggage to be ready to go tomorrow morning. We took a number of pictures of the troops & Officers of our Dekheila detachment, which we hope will come out well. Very little happened during the afternoon. Lt. Gray and the Chief went aboard the ship in the morning.
- January 23rd Baggage left for the ship this morning. 848 Observers are all going aboard too. Groundcrew troops remaining are being flown aboard by Avenger on Saturday or Sunday. There was a gale warning on, but after securing the a/c most of the troops went ashore, as did all the Officers. We expect to leave on Saturday or Sunday & to be in Colombo in a couple of weeks time. From there we go to Australia - probably Brisbane.
- Tomorrow the ship's(GREBE) giving a farewell party to 848 & 1841 Squadrons. We will be there.
- January 24th We did four or five ADDL's this morning. The wind was very strong & over the hills it was most difficult & bumpy. However, Spencer seemed quite satisfied. Make & Mend in the afternoon. The Chief wants to leave the Squadron & has asked to change with Chief Patterson 775 Squadron.
- The Mess are giving us & 848 Squadron a farewell party. Free drinks! Many Verey cartridges lit up the sky as the party proceeded.
- January 25th Very little happened this morning and after Stand Easy all our ten troops & nine Officers secured for the day.
- January 26th The troops were secured after Stand Easy this morning but at lunch time Lt Gray returned from the ship with some information and Woodroof had everyone working by 1305 & by 1330 S/Lt's Humphries, Connolly and Harrison had started a period of ADDL's. Humphries was inclined to be fast, Harrison too straight on the approach, while Connolly's were good. "Wings" came to give us a short lecture about our landings on tomorrow, but didn't keep us for long. The new system is to have 12 a/c in the landing circuit at the same time. Doesn't sound too good to us!
- January 27th LCDR Garland led a formation of 9 Corsairs off from Dekheila at about 1030 while Lt Gray took the rest. Garland's formation flew about 300' over Alex twice before setting course for the ship. Some of Gray's flight had already landed on by the time Garland's crowd arrived, but they waited until they received a CHARLIE from the ship. The circuit round the ship when Garland's formation did break up must have been a mile or two long & Corsairs were practically over the horizon before they were turning downwind! Even then the last four had to circle for half an hour - while the FORMIDABLE sailed away from the coast for a while. The Avengers were also delayed. However everyone landed safely, if not skillfully. At last the Squadron's back again together, or as much together as Central Maintenance allows. Next step is to find S/LtMacKinnon & the C.O., who is flying Thunderbolts in Burma!
- The ship pounded away at full speed all afternoon & as dusk was falling, lost way just off Port Said. She then went North at 17 knots, turned and came back, starting down the Suez Canal in the early hours.

January 28th The ship sailed along at about 7 or 8 knots all day through the Canal. It was pleasantly cool and the Sun shone brightly. It seemed quite extraordinary to be on so large a ship and yet to be landlocked with desert on both sides! About 1530 we came to the Great Bitter Lake, calm as a mill-pond. Some Merchantmen at anchor & two Italian Battleships. The odd Walrus doing circuits and bumps. Sunderland took off just after we'd anchored & was attacked by a Warhawk which took off from a nearby field.

We remained in the Great Bitter Lake all night & started through the Canal early in the morning.

The Captain gave a short talk on the recent flying casualties at 1730. There will be a small amount of flying in the Gulf of Suez tomorrow.

January 29th We reached Suez & the end of the Canal about 1030 this morning. Escort Carrier 38 was anchored in the harbour amongst other ships. After lunch some of 848 took off & three Corsairs flown by S/Lt's Maitland, Ferguson and Wood. S/Lt Harrison was to have been the fourth member, but his a/c went u/s. S/Lt's Maitland & Wood acted as bombers while Ferguson attacked them - visual interception from the ship. Everyone landed safely. Tomorrow there is a bigger flying programme.

January 30th S/Lt's Brown, Connolly, Crosland and Harrison went off on a Fighter Direction exercise. S/Lt's Cartledge & Moores, 1842 Squadron, acted as bombers. Everyone landed on safely afterwards. After lunch some D.L.T.'s were planned for those of the Squadron who had been at Dekheila, but only the first four members took off. S/Lt's Wood & Maitland succeeded in doing 2 landings each and S/Lt's Humphries & Harrison, one each. S/Lt's Morten & Blaikie were acting as bombers for 1842. S/Lt Blaikie had to return early because of hydraulic trouble: he couldn't retract his undercarriage completely.

Another big flying programme for tomorrow. We entered the Tropics at 1730 this afternoon.

January 31st Optimal tropical rig today. It's beginning to get very hot & oppressive below decks. The Flight Deck nowadays is the best place to be. There was flying at 0930 this morning. S/Lt's Ferguson, Connolly, Maitland & Reeve went off to do camera attacks. S/Lt's Glading & McLisky took off to act as bombers for some of 1842 who were being directed as interceptors. S/Lt Connolly's hydraulics went u/s after take off & he had to use his CO<sub>2</sub> bottle to lower his undercarriage. (7Z) He got his flaps down alright & landed on safely. S/Lt Maitland's undercarriage doors closed before the wheels (the Port side); on his second attempt, wheels went first but the doors were bent & still couldn't shut properly. S/Lt Reeves engine ran very roughly & he had to stooge the whole time. Everyone landed on again safely. We are now about level with Port Sudan & expect to be in Aden tomorrow afternoon. It becomes warmer every moment.

A day of maintenance tomorrow - there are only four of five a/c serviceable between both Corsair Squadrons.

February 1st Very strong winds all day & still very oppressive anywhere below. The ship vibrated all the time & kept up a speed of 25 knots into wind, making the wind speed over the deck 50 knots at least! The Destroyers made a pretty picture line astern of us, taking it green over the bows.

We reached Aden about 1700 and by that time all the a/c were on deck and some had already been run up. There's a big programme tomorrow & we can just muster 8 a/c for it - dive bombing a towed target.

February 2nd We did manage to get 8 Corsairs for this morning's exercise but 7 <sup>Sugar</sup>~~Dog~~ (S/Lt Bastien) never took off at all and 7 Dog (S/Lt Connolly) returned for an emergency landing about 50 minutes after he'd taken off. His engine had been popping and cutting out. He landed on safely but A.R.D. have not decided yet whether it was magneto trouble or something to do with piston rings. Those who were still air-borne continued escorting the Avengers and then carried out a dive bombing and strafing attack while the Avengers followed in a glide bombing attack. Every-

one landed on very swiftly and efficiently & were congratulated by the Captain - Good Show!!

We left Aden this morning about 0930 and the flying was done in the Gulf of Aden. It's cooler than yesterday, particularly on the Flight Deck. Below it's still humid.

February 3rd

Someone changed their mind and we are to send up two Pilots this afternoon - S/Lt's Bastien and Glading. Maintenance continued all day. The C.B.A.L. Officers gave a lecture to half the Squadron this morning at 0900. Four other members did some stripping of the Boat Deck with P.O. Ward. After lunch the other half of the Squadron went for the bombardment lectures. S/Lt Bastien took off this afternoon but S/Lt Glading couldn't get started & didn't fly. Bastien did a nice approach and landing.

Today's excitement was an Avenger whose tyre burst on take off, S/Lt Vickers 848 was driving. He swerved to the left hitting the forward Barrier Stanchion (which was of course down) after which his Starboard brake - he'd had this full on which didn't stop him swerving to Port - suddenly took effect & he swerved to Starboard, & disappeared almost below the deck! His landing afterwards was very nice. No flying tomorrow, sundry lectures and so on.

February 4th

Very little to report today. Maintenance continues & we've definitely stopped flying till we reach Ceylon. We now only have three a/c into A.R.D., the rest are serviceable. The Captain is clamping down on shirkers in the Hangar. Fifteen Riggers came up to lodge a complaint to Lt Gray. They didn't want to be chockmen!

February 5th

Avengers flew off about 0700 this morning & 6 Corsairs were taxied forward, some by 1841, some by 1842. Maintenance continued all day and seems to be bearing fruit. We have 10 out of 15 serviceable at the moment. A Make & Mend was enjoyed by everyone in the afternoon. The Destroyers lay about 25 to 50 yards astern & were oiled one at a time by us. A pipeline was led along the Quarterdeck & was picked up by the Destroyers. The other escort circled us while this was going on.

A great many people on deck including some unfortunates doing No. 11's, running around carrying rifles. Corsairs were lashed down & secured at 1930.

February 6th

About six Pilots went to practice some Naval bombardment R.T. procedures at 0900. The Avengers were flying at 0700 & some Corsairs had to be taxied forward at that unearthly hour. Maintenance is about the same as yesterday but we now have some information about future movements. We fly off tomorrow to an R.N.A.S. in Northern Ceylon, land there & fly about 350 miles to an R.N. Air Repair Depot, where we leave these a/c. Then we return by air transport to Ceylon and pick up the new FG-1's. The troops go ashore with their gear & stores on Saturday.

February 7th

It seems to be getting hotter! Our serviceability is almost 100%. 7 Roger is a complete write-off though and will be lightered ashore. A swarf of solid oil compound was found in the filter - shades of desert sand & run ups at Dekheila. Aircraft are being ranged aft & Avengers struck down. We take off at first light tomorrow. All baggage to be in the Hangar this evening & all gear in the cabs themselves (gear needed for one night). S/Lt Humphries is flying one of 1842's Corsairs ashore - 9 Peter.

Get some desert time in!

February 8th

Briefing at about 0730 this morning, Pilots had breakfast at 0630. Clocks having been advanced half an hour, it's even more of a villainous hour than one might imagine. Everyone took off successfully, even S/Lt Blaikie in 7 Yoke with a 600 mag drop! At R.N.A.S. PUTTALLAM (one "t") - the full jungle strip of steel matting - 7 X-ray (S/Lt Glading) went off the runway and bent his propeller blades. All the rest landed safely. Red dust everywhere at our working place. It'll be even worse when we start up to go to Combatore. At the Control Tower one long lost C.O. turned up, fair bubbling over with the "forcing on" spirit! S/Lt MacKinnon is at Racecourse in Colombo & we'll soon meet him. LCDR Bigg-Wither had everything laid on from Combatore, all normal passenger flights between there and Colombo had been stopped & we simply flew our Corsairs up to Combatore, handed in our clocks and stepped aboard waiting S.N.B.'s (Expeditors). The red dust at PUTTALLAM did do rather deadly work; either that or the attraction of the jungle.

life was too strong. At least S/Lt's Reeve & Humphries went u/s on the deck & S/Lt Harrison had a hydraulic failure after take off & returned to the Racecourse, Colombo. S/Lt Bastien remained at Putallam & flew later to Colombo by Reliant. Lt Gray flew from Putallam to Colombo in LCDR Bigg-Wither's new Corsair IV. Eventually, therefore, only eleven of our Corsairs were turned over to the Repair Depot at Combatore! They are spread all over Ceylon. 7 George is at Colombo, 7 Roger was lightered ashore & 7 X-ray & 7 Sugar are at Putallam.

From Combatore Pilots returned in two Expeditors to the Racecourse, Colombo. Excellent aircraft, these S.N.B.'s, for zizzing. At the Racecourse we found S/Lt MacKinnon, the same as ever! About half the Officer's baggage is adrift & the beds are incredibly hard. However, Pilots slept like logs - or so they report.

February 9th Squadron Officers took it leisurely this morning. Up to breakfast fairly late, followed by a somewhat exhausting joining routine - memories of certain U.S.N. Air Stations. Our dispersal is fairly large but dusty, and the new Corsair IV's are in pretty bad condition - sand everywhere. S/Lt Tomlinson, whom none of us had seen since Lewiston last year, appeared in a truck crossing the landing strip. Everyone seems to have gone to Australia. S/Lt Maitland went off to town with some of the Stewards in a fruitless search for the lost Squadron baggage. It was later discovered in one of the trucks at the Racecourse which had never been unloaded! Cocktail party on the ship, which the C.O. and Lt Gray attended.

February 10th The Squadron took over 8 new Corsairs today from H.M.S. BERHUNDA. These are the Goodyear Corsairs (FG-1's), designated Corsair IV's, which we all admired in Gibraltar. They have a polished Blue finish & Blue & White roundels on the fuselage & wings. The wingtips have been shortened a little more than our old Corsair II's & they have a raised tailwheel. The only difference is the electric starter. The aircraft are in poor condition, covered with red sand & dust. The morning was spent cleaning & checking them. This continued after lunch as well. S/Lt Maitland has been granted leave till the 18th to go to Calcutta. He leaves tomorrow for Madras by D.C. 3.

February 11th The troops continued cleaning and checking the new a/c in the morning. There was a Make & Mend in the afternoon and most people went swimming.

February 12th More cleaning and checking of Corsairs. Ten Pilots stood by all day to go to Combatore to pick up ten new Corsair IV's. In the end they didn't go.

February 13th We picked up eight more Corsair IV's from H.M.S. BEHRUNDA. They are even more filthy than the first ones! Pilots are being given two days leave but only S/Lt's Glading & McLisky seem to have taken advantage of it so far and gone away. The Squadron played a Station team at Soccer. S/Lt Connolly was badly injured - knee sprained and muscles pulled.

February 14th The troops began painting letters on the cabs today & putting a two inch White edging to the roundels. S/Lt's Crosland, Ferguson, Humphries and Wood went off on a Jungle Course. They were picked up at F.O.(Air) by a Squadron Leader & then taken inland to meet a V.R. Lieutenant and another R.A.F. type. Both of these people had lived in Ceylon for 15 to 20 years so knew what they were doing! The first day consisted mostly of lectures & advice and it wasn't till the second day that our four Pilots really started putting in the jungle hours!

February 15th Two of the new cabs were flight tested today. The oleo's seemed softer & it seems to be easier to get the speed down to 80 knots than with a "II". The electric starter requires a slightly different technique, but gives no difficulty.

Our jungle types were sailing down a river today on bamboo rafts & getting rather sunburnt. The water wasn't too clean either, but one can't expect everything in the jungle. They spent the night in a clearing sleeping in hammocks made of parachute silk & boiled water in bamboo trunks, as per book & lectures. Native tom-toms could be heard during the night - quite the Hollywood touch.

February 16th There was a good deal more test flying today, but there are still a number of cabs which haven't been flown at all yet.

February 17th Altogether, 10 Corsairs have been test flown so far & there are still 8 to do. Tomorrow there is a programme of A.D.D.L.'s and on the 19th we D.L. Training, consisting of two landings each!

February 18th Painting of the cabs continued & Bob Joyce came ashore to deal with the A.D.D.L.'s. Most people found difficulty in the approach & there were a number of wave offs. Gradually Pilots settled down & all found that these new Corsairs fly slowly very nicely.  
There was a Make & Mend in the afternoon. S/Lt Maitland returned from Calcutta. He left at 5.00 A.M. this morning by Dakota & was at Behrunda at 1730.

February 19th There are three details of D.L.'s for today. ~~Seven~~ Six Pilots went off at 1100 & returned surprisingly quickly. We even thought that there might have been a delay & they had all been sent back! But they hadn't. Each had completed his landings. At 1430 seven more Pilots took off & they too completed their landings according to plan. The last detail at 1700 consisted of 3 of our Pilots & 3 of 1842's. They all completed their two D.L.'s!! Captain was very pleased the landings had been good. Altogether there had been 9 of them including the Avengers efforts.

February 20th The troops worked hard all day on the Corsairs to get them cleaned and serviceable for the 22nd when we land on for good. They are leaving for the ship tomorrow. Stores are being packed & Officers gear has to be ready by 0800 tomorrow morning.

February 21st The troops left the Station with all the stores by 0930 for H.M.S. FORMIDABLE. Officers had a day off & most of them went swimming directly after lunch. The A.R.D. H.M.S. BERHUNDA did D.I.'s on our a/c about 1300. They hadn't much clue on using the new starter. S/Lt Reeve swung 7 Love, the only one that hadn't been adjusted. Fortunately the readings were quite accurate.

February 22nd Pilots packed their baggage behind the seats after breakfast this morning. The covers were removed & wrapped up & also placed behind the seat. Each Pilot also carried a U.S.N. survival back pad with him. Carrying these, the new Mae West's & wearing Frank Suit's, we'll have to be hoisted into our a/c by crane!

After lunch all Pilots were briefed, started up & were airborne by about 1300. Everyone landed on safely, but the quality wasn't as good as the D.L.'s of the 20th.

Big scheme for a dummy strike tomorrow to give the A.H.P. and Armourers practice in ranging a/c & in rearming & bombing-up. Watches(!) start at midnight!! We are doing A.O.W. & S/Lt Brown begins with a Middle.

February 23rd Action Stations were sounded at dawn today & continued all morning until about 1430. Pilots scheduled to fly were in the A.I.R. at 0800 but nothing happened there & they moved on to A.O.R. After a long wait, we discovered that the big practice strike was off (we had three flights of four a/c to fly) till the afternoon. S/Lt Brown was asked whether there would be flying this afternoon; he immediately got hold of a Chief Stoker who told him there wouldn't be any! Sure enough, there wasn't. However, all the Corsairs & Avengers were taxied up the deck in the morning to give the A.H.P. and the Armourers practice at ranging, refuelling & rearming. This was repeated in the afternoon. We have five Corsairs with flat tail oleo's.

February 24th The troops worked in the morning & had a Make & Mend in the afternoon. There was a certain amount of rain before lunch but the weather cleared later. King Neptune & Court came aboard at 1245 with his retinue of Bears, Barbers, Policemen & Trumpeters. His throne was a raised platform near the Bridge with canvas swimming pools on each side of it & tilting chairs for the unfortunate victims. The Captain was tried first, soaped & shaved and ducked ceremoniously. He was followed by the Commander, the P.M.O., Toothy and all the other celebrities, including LCDR Bigg-Wither & LCDR Garland. S/Lt McLisky complete with Mae West, which the Barber insisted on removing, was also a willing victim. Jack Kennedy took a good ducking as well. The trials gradually became quicker & the duckings more frequent & the inevitable happened - a free for all which was extremely funny. We saw the Chief go in and then the Officers one by one. Even those who

Stokers know all the answers! Even that 1941 Sqdn is leaving the ship permanently!!!

thought they were safe up on the Goofers Gallery were cheerfully sprayed with a hose and obliged to come down. In short, a good & watery time was had by all.

The A.G.O. tried many times to get out of the water but in the end gave it up & sort of sat there! There was a 30 knot wind over the Flight Deck & there are going to be a lot of sore backs tomorrow.

February 25th

We actually cross the line today & amazingly there's another Make & Mend - at least until 1700. Two 1842 Corsairs flying with Avengers. A.R.D. are working on our numerous flat tail oleo's & hope to have a number of them serviceable by tomorrow. But the cabs themselves still need a thoroughly good clean.

February 26th

Four Pilots standing by this morning & four in the afternoon as well. S/Lt's Crosland and Reeve flew off for an interception exercise in the morning. A slight swell but the sea was very smooth and looked as if it might be Blue treacle instead of water. Jack Kennedy gave a lecture after lunch on checking the Corsair from the Pilots point of view. This was followed by a talk by the C.O. on the general state of Squadron morale & what to do about it. In future all Pilots are to give a fortnightly report on the work done by their Riggers and Fitters, and they are also to carry out complete D.I.'s themselves at frequent intervals. About seven Pilots volunteered for night taxiing at 2000 this evening; this was later cancelled because of a big panic alarm. This came off about 1845, the look-outs reporting unidentified aircraft about. The Radar hadn't picked anything up. There were a great many u/s a/c on deck & there was a great hustle to get these below. Four Corsairs were ready to be accelerated. Even the 4.5" fired some rounds hopefully! The "aircraft" turned out to be a star! However, we are within the range of enemy long-range reconnaissance & Avengers were at readiness all night.

February 27th

At least sixteen Corsairs were manned and run up at first light. Some of these belonging to 1842, had bombs. Four Pilots were standing by all day until dusk, but serviceability which has been very poor is just beginning to pick up. If only we could get some more of our a/c on the deck, they could be run up & checked. Perhaps we'll be able to do so tomorrow. We stand by tomorrow afternoon & until dusk. Four of our Pilots are flying tomorrow morning.

February 28th

LCDR Bigg-Wither and S/Lt's Blaikie, Glading & McLisky were up this afternoon for interceptions. The C.O. returned after 45 minutes with a u/s transmitter. The remaining three continued by themselves. S/Lt Glading put in a great deal of orbiting time. 1842 did some attacks on the ship this morning & came quite low. Sections were a long way apart though. Our serviceability is improving, but we want an opportunity to run up the cabs on deck, & apart from that it's time our troops had some time in the fresh air. The Hangar has been uncomfortably hot recently. The C.O.'s flight were to go to 20,000' but there were showers about, limiting visibility & low cloud and the take off was delayed. Eventually, when they did take off, they were briefed to go to 1000' instead.

March 1st

No Pilot of the Squadron flew today due to the fact that the afternoon programme, when Sub Lieutenant's MacKinnon and Maitland's names appeared, was cancelled and instead seven Avengers flew off at 1500 on patrol looking for the odd sub and also for survivors from a Liberty ship torpedoed in these waters three weeks ago. The weather was surprisingly dull and cool, the sky being completely overcast all day, according to the Navigator a result of effect of the S.E. Trade Winds which we are now encountering. The wind over the deck was about 40 knots and little change in course was necessary for flying off and on.

During the day the Maintenance Officer, S/Lt Brown, was observed on the Flight Deck aft, watching the running up of two Corsairs, 7W & 7K, so putting them once more serviceable, after repairs and adjustments to oil cooler systems and tail oleo's. Thus our serviceability increases! In fact, Mr. Brown has been heard to state that could he but range the remainder of our unserviceable cabs and run them up, he could reach the elusive 100% figure!

Today being our first anniversary, it was considered a good thing to mark the day with a small get together in the ante-room, the liquor situation being quite good. The party began quietly around 1930, most of the types being

Survivors met in Sydney, after being picked up by H.M.S. "ACTIVITY".



present together with Major Bill Harper, Mr. Jack Kennedy, LCDR Hawkes and sundry odd bods. S/Lt Connolly was seen by many walking without his stick, it is said that he found it impossible to cope with a full glass as well, and S/Lt Glading was eventually persuaded to take the odd noggin after making the bold statement that the reason he did not normally drink was because alcohol had absolutely no effect on him whatsoever. Unfortunately there is no reliable or capable witness to indicate the veracity of this line.

We were jolly fortunate in being on board again, all together again for the first time in months, and similarly in having access to a good bar. The C.O. was in good form at dinner and officially welcomed Lieutenant R.H. Gray and S/Lt 'Pipe' MacKinnon to the Squadron, since they were not in it at the beginning of it's time. Hammy replied in his usual self-effacing style and Pipe spoke too - Harrison declined an interpretation. Drinking was resumed, or more correctly, continued at the bar; the occasion was marked by the traditional cutting of the handkerchief, and several members were chug-a-lugged with full glasses of Scotch.

Under the persuasive power of the Commander, they who were still present at the end staggered away to continue the fight elsewhere. It is rumoured that the gallant Senior Pilot's beautiful shiner was collected whilst attacking the Mason-Dixon line.

As might be expected, conditions were very dull today though the sunlight was exceptionally bright. After Taxiing the deck park for'd, most Pilots settled down to watch the work progressing on the aircraft and by the end of the day we had as many serviceable aircraft as Pilots. We were due in Fremantle on Saturday evening and the big practice strike was duly evolved.

It was generally agreed that provided we kept our tailwheels locked when taking off, nothing could go wrong!

We spent the morning eating breakfast and lunch, getting the full briefing in between. Everything was quite well organized and take off was right on time. We had 14 Pilots flying their own cabs, including 6 C.A.P., who it was intended should intercept the strike on it's way back to attack the ship and her escort. This flight was led by S/Lt(A) B. Brown in place of our Senior P, the latter being temporarily incapacitated as aforementioned, whilst the remaining two flights of four each, acting as medium cover, were commanded by the C.O., S/Lt(A) MacKinnon leading the sub flight. 1842 Squadron provided the close escort, part of which was rigidly controlled by that excellent shepherd, Lt(A) P. Clarke.

As usual, Lynx-eyed McLisky reported bandits coming in long before anyone saw anything, and on one occasion proved himself extremely useful by keeping a watchful eye on 3A! The high speed attacks were soon over and after the final rendezvous we bogged around the sky until it was our turn to land on. During the operation, S/Lt Brown was unfortunate enough to prang his Port flap slightly, at the same time causing Lt. Joyce to jump for his net.

During high tea, Major Bill Harper was told he could keep Western Australia, which it must be admitted, did not look very attractive from the air: diplomatic relations were in the balance, but Bill announced the general intention of doing so anyway. Some of the Pilots were inclined to change their minds when they got a closer look at the scenery the same evening. We were given shore leave until midnight and almost everyone spent a few hours in Perth. Due to the liquor control it was a long evening for some, but S/Lt Glading was thrown out of several milkbars.

There was no flying today: the weather is now reasonably cool and quite a good swell is running. We have refuelled and left Fremantle at 0800 taking with us a good supply of Milk and fresh vegetables and fruit. In addition, the Australian Comfort Fund gave a present to each man on board, comprised of chocolate, fruit, candy, cake and so on, all of which is much appreciated..

Most of the Squadron enjoyed a Make & Mend this afternoon, though a few Fitters spent some of their time working: the flying on Saturday had produced a few oil leaks in a few C.S.U.'s and these were being fixed.

Long live  
Quasimodo!

Friday  
March 2nd.

Saturday  
March 3rd

Sunday  
March 4th

Monday  
March 5th The Squadron is not flying today, 10 T.B.F.'s went off this morning and 1842 will supply Corsairs for this afternoon's exercise.

Tuesday  
March 6th We flew off 10 cabs today in three flights, the C.O. leading with just a Number 2 - Jimmy Blaikie: Yellow and Blue flights led by Lt Gray and S/Lt MacKinnon contained S/Lt's Crosland, Ferguson, Maitland, Wood, Harrison, Humphries and Bastien. The exercise included patrol formation, camera attacks and dummy straffing on our Destroyer escort. It was fairly satisfactory once the question of what kind of formation was decided upon. This time, to try and improve the landing interval, the whole flights were sent into the landing circle and this backing up appeared to be good, most of the Pilots breaking away at 15 second intervals. However, three people were waved round and, on at least one of these occasions, the deck parties were definitely slow. In all it took eight minutes which is almost 50 second intervals - not very good! The main thing was that everyone got on safely.

We were promised - rather hopefully - that films would be assessed on the projector at 1430 the same day. This did not happen, but the Photographic Dept. produced the negs. very quickly.

The weather is now much cooler, and when the ship is into wind, it is quite cold on the Flight Deck. At night it is cool doing A.O.W. on the Bridge. Even that outdoor type, McLisky, is not now asleep on the Quarterdeck.

Wednesday  
March 7th This morning saw more taxiing back and forth on the Flight Deck than ever: S/Lt's Crosland, Wood, Humphries, Ferguson and Morten getting in some stirring work, the last mentioned having only left his bunk a short while ago where he has been languishing in with some mysterious fever. Everyone except Squadron defaulters is glad to see him around again. It now only remains for Lt Gray to get rid of his Black eye completely(it has begun to fade), and for Connolly to throw away his crutch, and we will have a full complement of serviceable Pilots.

The taxiing and flying off - including the squirting went well in spite of the fact that one of the '42 types was squirted without flaps. S/Lt's Glading and McLisky took off but landed on very soon again afterwards.

At 1400 we attended a lecture in the Hangar given by S/Lt Shalcroft on the fire appliances, including extinguishers, sprinklers, foam and salt water sprays, and fire curtains.

At 1500 the films of the camera attacks taken yesterday were quickly run through the projector in the A.I.R. It is the first time in the Squadron's history that a whole batch of films have been this publicly examined and the benefits of such criticism - even without accurate assessment are obviously great. May we have more such opportunities!

Thursday  
March 8th It had been decided to fly off a large strike today, similar to the one which operated on Saturday outside Fremantle, and the Squadron Pilots assembled in the A.I.R. at 1000 for briefing. It was arranged to have C.A.P. again, but this time after their attacks they were to keep clear of the main strike to avoid confusion, and during such time as they were not under the direct control of the ship they could carry out camera attack exercises on each other. Meantime the A.H.P. had been ranging aircraft on deck, we were to fly off 12 planes while 1842 put up 14. At this point it may be noted that the Squadron had full serviceability and apart from very slight sand in the wingroots, and some dirt in the airframes, S/Lt(A) B. Brown was satisfied. Further to this situation it has also been pointed out that as soon as the wings are spread and the aircraft is flown, then the air circulating inside the airfoil no doubt evenly distributes the sand remaining in those inaccessible compartments over the nicely greased parts of the wing folding mechanism. Also - that a number of the planes have been a permanent part of the deck park and the salt water breaking over the fuselages and wings provides an excellent adhesion base for the sulphurous dust and smoke which also at times envelopes the aircraft on deck.

To return to the balbo - it was cancelled owing to the state of the sea which was causing heavy rolling, and the weather, which was not promising. Instead,

the brasshats decided to send up 10 of our a/c to carry out camera attacks at 1630. Further briefing was given by our Senior Subbie, who honoured S/Lt's Wood & Humphries with the job of carrying out the 'suicide attack'. Pilots had tea and reported to the A.O.R. at 1600, but it had already begun to rain. We spent a little time measuring the course & distance to New Zealand for the benefit of McLisky, who was considering the possibility of ditching in Whangarei Creek, but Commander(O) arrived with the news that we were not going to fly, that Schoolie persuaded the Skipper it wasn't worth it. Lt(A) Richardson RN offered his sympathies to the would-be aviators.

Action Stations, which was to have been sounded at 1400, was also cancelled so that books, bedding, etc. had been stowed away all to no avail.

Friday  
March 9th

We managed the full strike at last. According to the Capt's latest report, everything went off satisfactorily, though a little time was lost getting Corsairs struck down for'd & rearranged aft. In particular, S/Lt Morten became cheered as there seemed to be no end to this "evolution". Finally however, he did manage to get off.

It was very pleasant watching the T.B.F.'s, which were to do a strike on the ship. We could see the wooded country below and concluded that it must be the 'bush'.

The C.O. led the first four followed by Lt Gray's flight, whilst we also supplied C.A.P. which was vectored out to intercept. Here there was a little trouble owing to a reciprocal course being flown - not it is believed, an error on the part of the Pilots. Landing on times appear to be improving, even though our Canadian Lieutenant came in with his hook up - getting a wave off.

Saturday  
March 10th

We are due in Sydney today, but before we dock, ten Pilots are going up on gun camera attacks, so that after this flight, everyone should have at least one assessment. When we took off we were only thirty miles or so from the harbour, and as soon as we were airborne, could see land though there was a fair amount of mist at low altitude. Splitting up into pairs, we carried out attacks on each other until it was time to reform and do strafing on the ship and escorts; this had been particularly requested so the Gunners could get in some practice. Several attacks were carried out, both from good heights and from low levels; moreover, they were all pressed home and the types watching from the Flight Deck were considerably impressed.

Only two slight incidents were remarked upon - firstly someone left his transmitter on for a long time in the beginning of the hop, and secondly, the Brown-Humphries section attacked the dive bombers - much to Judy Garland's annoyance! Landing on was good & without mishap.

Everyone began getting cleaned into tropical White's & we entered harbour in fine style, with the Band playing lustily. The local sightseers gave us a grand reception as we finally came into the dock and tied up. The types who had been taking passage with us quickly departed, Lieut. Munroe was gone on the M.C. very smartly, but Major Bill Harper came down to the ante-room to say Cheerio.

During the evening all the types who were not Watch aboard made their way into town & it seemed that everyone thoroughly enjoyed their first night ashore.

Sunday  
March 11th

Full Divisions this morning, followed by stand up Church. It was quite pleasant, fresh with the Sun shining! The Skipper read the lesson - the parable of the five loaves and two fishes, & then appropriately enough, began to examine the long outstanding question of the food situation on board. It will be remembered that there were many bitches about grub from the troops when we were in Gib.

After it was all over, he called the Pilots together and told them that their leave was approved, and Biggy said we could clear out after seeing the films of the attacks. Everyone was free from the 12th to the 19th, with the exception of S/Lt's Reeve & Maitland who were to carry out duty boy each for five days & from the 10th to the 20th together. Just now Les is on leave - enjoying the night life in Sydney no doubt.

In the afternoon, almost everyone went ashore. One tennis party was made up by S/Lt's Maitland, Ferguson & Humphries who went to the Royal Sydney Golf

Was ship's Co. forgotten  
& left on the Flight Deck  
too long?

Course & had a wizard day's tennis. With them went S/Lt's Glading & Shalcroft, who jousting on the links to their hearts content. Our Bob went round in a modest 77, closely followed by his opponent, who also wields a nifty niblick!

Monday  
March 12th

Most of the types are trying to find somewhere to stay, away from the ship, either in town or country, and no doubt they will avail themselves of the hospitality extended by many of the families in and around Sydney.

Monday  
March 19th

About midday, the boys began to arrive on board for the lunchtime session. Everyone was passing the word about his experiences over the odd beer and gradually we were made aware of the goings on during the last week. Everyone had an excellent time and was full of appreciation for the way he had been entertained, and for the people he had met. Though as yet there are no serious engagements to report, it is felt that another few days would have seen some of our most stalwart types bowled out by the attractive types they met; amongst these S/Lt's Morten and Reeve figured prominently.

S/Lt's Glading and McLisky managed to include a good deal of golf & tennis respectively in their time ashore, and it is felt that they might have given a good account of themselves, both returned looking tired from their exertions: we now expect Bob to get his head down for a few days to make up for lost sleep, but he admits he cannot zizz with his old one-time ease.

It was very encouraging to note that despite the almost overpowering feminine attractions, the boys managed to break away and regularly around 4.30 P.M. attended the beer session at the Australia Hotel (commonly known as the Passion Pit!). We feel that the licencing hours were a little unusual, but in any case the beer went off at about 5.45 P.M. so that it did not matter much. Amongst those in regular attendance were the C.O., Hammy Gray and S/Lt's Morten, Blaikie, Harrison, Humphries and Pipe MacKinnon, though the latter disappeared suddenly one day with S/Lt's Ferguson and Blaikie into the country and were seen no more for days.

S/Lt Donald Wood left for the country quite early and so did Barrie Brown and Johnnie Crosland.

During the week one could see a fair representation of the Squadron at Prince's or Romano's night club, and those very cosmopolitan sophisticated pubs may remember us for some time, if only on account of the bubbly put away. At all times we were in good spirits and mixed freely with all the brasshats and gold braid which seemed to haunt both places: nothing daunted the odd Subbie could often be plainly seen dancing in his inimitably smooth fashion alongside the Admiral.

Meantime, the ship's company had been painting ship and a very smart job they did too: when we returned she looked very trim. By this time S/Lt Reeve had taken over S.D.O. from S/Lt Maitland and wherever possible carried on with the job of painting new markings on the aircraft, though from his bitter comments it seemed that difficulties were being encountered. Due to the work on the ship, considerable numbers of Squadron types were detailed off into special parties and so the number of hands left available was not great; also the correct type of paint for the markings was forthcoming in only minor quantities. However, good work had been done and the aircraft were in good state of repair, also the outer fuselage surfaces were generally cleaned and polished.

The Watches were each given 24 hours leave ashore, taking up three days, from Sunday midday to Wednesday, and it was apparent that this leave together with their nights ashore gave them plenty of chances to have a good time. In fact, they were particularly happy in Sydney and sorry to leave when the time came. As for the rest of the ship's Officers, they could often be seen in town, though when they were O.O.W. on the Brow during the Middle Watches, they were wont to bemoan their position when the odd Air Branch type staggered on board to get some 'well earned' sleep.

Tuesday  
March 20th

Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Commander-in-Chief British Pacific Fleet, was piped aboard today forenoon to inspect the ship generally and to see in particular the aircrews of her Squadrons. We were drawn up in tropical Whites in "C" Hangar owing to the weather - it was claspers and drizzling outboard, and LCDR Hawkes

called us all to attention for inspection. The Admiral went round fairly quickly speaking a few words to most of the New Zealand types in our crowd, about where they lived and how long it had been since they were last at home. Mac soon had him up the Whangarei River but no definite word was said about leave for them.

Addressing the whole assembly the Admiral remarked generally on the progress of the Pacific War and the part played by the F.A.A. so far; also on the possible arrangements in respect of Squadron time in a forward area. He seemed confident, wished us all good luck and later signalled us his favourable impression.

The remainder of the forenoon and all the afternoon was spent by the Pilots on their aircraft checking the serviceability and general cleanliness in preparation for the Captain's personal inspection which was due to begin at 1430. This took longer than was expected, in fact about 1630 it was discontinued and the remainder was to be looked at the following morning at 0830.

Another highlight of the day was the cocktail party on board which was arranged to return a little of the hospitality extended to the Officers by the people of Sydney. Almost everyone brought one or more guests, the Quarterdeck was decorated and arranged as an open bar, whilst the ante-room accommodated the overflow. The whole thing went off very well and finally the Commander had to remind the Officers to take their guests ashore as arranged: this was promptly done.

The Squadron types proceeded to enjoy their last night ashore in Sydney, most of them finishing up at the Prince's where several good parties went on until midnight.

At 0830 the Captain resumed his inspection of ships aircraft accompanied by Wings and Heads of Maintenance Depts; apart from minor points everything was satisfactory and the hands continued the work of painting on the new markings. The ship meanwhile was prepared for sea and about 1530 we slipped moorings and proceeded, most of the ships company and Officers paying the customary marks of respect.

As soon as we were clear of the harbour, the aircraft were ranged for a fly-off. It had been decided to send our Squadron ashore for one day to swing compasses, together with some Avengers. Due to a rather delayed start the fly-off was not very efficient, and in any case one or two of the Corsairs which had been serviced were yet to be run up to confirm that they were OK to fly.

S/Lt's MacKinnon, Wood and Brown did not get off at all, Pipe was now 'S' (his a/c i.e.); Woody tried to get off but somehow the prop soon got into fully coarse and he promptly cut his gun and stayed on the deck; and Barrie didn't get his battery changed in time. S/Lt Bastien did take off but was soon heard calling up in familiar tones asking for an emergency landing as his hydraulics had gone u/s. This was duly accomplished satisfactorily.

The rest led by the C.O. flew inland and down the coast to Jervis Bay where they landed on an excellent runway just as it was getting dark. As soon as the aircraft were parked the Pilots were taken from 'the strip' - so called by the locals - to the main Air Station at Nowra - about 25 Miles away. Here they were fed and given bunks for the evening.

The forenoon was fully taken up by compass swinging which was officially carried out and/or controlled by S/Lt Reeves and aides. Only four of the aircraft were found to be in need of compass corrections and this was done immediately after lunch.

As soon as the final signal about 1842 Squadron flying off was received, arrangements were made to fly the bulk of the Squadron back on board.

Meanwhile, S/Lt's MacKinnon, Wood, Brown and Bastien having left the ship in the early morning - take off 0605 - had also had their a/c swung. Owing to some congestion on the deck it was decided to leave behind at Nowra S/Lt's Harrison & Humphries. The rest flew out around 1500 and landed satisfactorily.

The two remaining explored the possibilities of Jervis Bay in company with Harry Griffin, now on leave after ops, and found the beer extremely good.

Wednesday  
March 21st

Thursday  
March 22nd

Friday  
March 23rd

On board, a C.A.P. was flown by the C.O. and S/Lt Blaikie: this included some low level aerobatics which the ships company found highly entertaining.

S/Lt's Ferguson and Glading flew 7W and 7A to Jervis Bay for swinging and sight aligning which work being completed in the forenoon they must have joined forces with Harrison & Humphries down in the village. They had the odd swim in the pool and Glading once more went to town on icecreams and milksakes. Later that evening he was observed knocking back the odd beer, thoroughly enjoying the unlooked for extra night ashore.

Saturday  
March 24th

The four Squadron Pilots at Jervis Bay, viz - S/Lt's Ferguson, Glading, Harrison and Humphries flew out this morning and landed on. Ferguson had some difficulty in starting his engine and by the time the flight taxied out, led by Harrison, the a/c of 1842 Squadron had taken off and set course. Visibility was bad, the mist being 5000 ft thick and unfortunately the course and distance - 048° 35 min did not bring us within sight of the ship. To make matters worse, an attempt to use the beacon, the code of which had been changed for about three days, led us back again over the coast.

Eventually Cyclops homed the a/c satisfactorily and they were landed on.

The ship set course and shortly after lunch, was tied up to a buoy in Sydney Harbour off Double Bay to drop and collect the mail and load on stores. During the whole of that lovely afternoon the ship was visited by all kinds of small craft, yachts and motor boats, Duty Seaboats and Lighters. The ships company, they who were not working, ranged the Flight Deck and Boat Decks to see the types coming close alongside. The yachts contained some very attractive specimens and few managed to get a look at us without coming under close scrutiny from the many pairs of binoculars. That's all there was to it, for in spite of the fact that everyone hoped for one more night ashore, no one left the ship except on Duty, and we cast off at about 1740, taking one last look at the scenery including the famous bridge before we went.

Everyone hopes to go back again to spend some well earned leave there at a later date, even the New Zealanders who have been looking forward to seeing those much talked of islands again are not entirely unprepared to spend the odd week back in Sydney.

Sunday  
March 25th

Various theories have been put forward during the last month or so as to what our destination is to be in the Pacific, and the information given by the Captain to the whole ship over the Tannoy last night was very welcome inasmuch that it settled so many questions, though it leaves plenty of room for adventure.

The ship is going Northward along the coast to Manus - one of the Admiralty Islands, we should get there by Friday this week and, after a stay of two or three days we are forcing on to the Philippines. All this is great news! It seems we may be operational for some time with the 7th American Fleet, and the idea of forcing on Northwards to Formosa is the full, especially since we may well bypass the minor issues which remain to be settled in such places as British New Guinea, Borneo, Celebes and Sumatra.

A big strike was arranged which was to include almost all the Squadron: gun camera attacks and escort with 1842 flying also. The range was completed and engines started, but after the Carrier had orbited for some time searching for wind, it became apparent that only 28 knots would be over the deck, and some of the for'd Corsairs had to be struck down. The 'whistlers' on the other hand were warmed up and 'whistled' through the Hangar to come up aft and take off with a good run using 25 kts. One Avenger by S/Lt McKerrill came back u/s but all other a/c carried out their work and they landed on finally without mishap.

Monday  
March 26th

The Squadron will not fly during the next three days unless an emergency arises. Today two Avengers went off and returned before lunch. The general programme is to achieve the full serviceability before we reach Manus. Pilots were therefore advised by the C.O. in his night order book to see that good work is done continually by the crews, and to spend as much of their own remaining time genning up on the many spheres of interest important to their flying careers.

The gun camera films of Sunday were shown and results generally appeared satisfactory.

An interesting lecture was given by Lt Barlow RNVR Special Branch on escape and evasion from the Japanese in such parts of Asia as India, China, Formosa, the Philippines, New Britain, China and many of the smaller Pacific islands. His accounts of the various escape clubs was interesting and a little encouraging.

The afternoon was a Make & Mend since everyone was on duty on Sunday all day. When we left Sydney, we left also several Squadron ratings who have been drafted elsewhere including P.O. Humphries, Fox and Woodacre. We collected about 15 new types however, which will ease the situation. Unfortunately, S/Lt(A) Connolly had to stay behind in Hospital, his knee still being unable to stand any strain. Together with S/Lt(A) Hartshorne this made a deficiency of two Pilots.

To bring us up to full Squadron strength therefore, we collected from Nowra two new types both Canadian Lieutenants which, counting the indestructible Gray, makes three. They are more than welcome and we all hope will soon settle down and get to know everyone.

Introducing Lt's RCNVR G.A. Anderson, 'Andy' and W.B. Asbridge.

Already they are known to the boys. Previously they were on board HMS 'SLINGER' and, more than that, attached to that outstanding Squadron, the original "Totem" Squadron.

No flying for us today, general maintenance on a/c and one lecture by Loot. Baxter USN, on the use of the alphabetic grid code for a/c operating in the Pacific, first introduced by CINCPAC - now the second mod in use, and very good too.

Highlights in the ship's activities were fuelling the URCHIN in the forenoon, and being towed for'd by the UGANDA in the late afternoon. This last manoeuvre according to the Commander was performed in a seamanlike fashion, though a certain Mr. Brown thought otherwise.

In the ante-room there was a mild celebration of S/Lt(A) Harrison's 23rd birthday, and everyone was sincere in wishing him many more of them. Just now this type is interesting himself in ship's routine generally and a Watch Keeping Certificate in particular. To this end he is going great guns with the Commander who seems to appreciate this academic interest in the functioning of HMS FORMIDABLE.

The party went well, with the C.O. & Senior P well up to the bar and everyone had a good time in spite of S/Lt(A) G.C. O'Hall's efforts at contamination.

The work of painting roundels and call sign numbers on aircraft continues in the Hangar and on the Flight Deck, though the heat is terrific now that we are nearing the Equator once again. The Riggers and Fitters are probably wondering whether the wingroots - now really clean and free from sand, and the fuselage and wing surfaces - now highly polished, are going to keep in their present conditions - when we fly off and land at Manus! More red sand than that I suppose!

This morning at 0900 the Pilots attended a lecture by [CDR Fields on the call signs given to a/c & the appropriate R.T. procedure. At first sight the whole thing seems highly integrated and rather complex.

We have today two aircraft with duty Pilots standing by ready for immediate acceleration should any hostile machine approach the ship. This Watch goes on from dawn to dusk & will probably be taken over by some of 1842 Pilots tomorrow. However there were so many aircraft on deck that it would have caused a minor panic to have to launch the C.A.P. In spite of the fact that at one time four aircraft were registered on the Radar during the afternoon, closing within about 40 miles, no one was squirted.

At about 1500 we sighted land and at 1540 passed between the first two small islands of the Jomard group, in the Louisiade Archipelago. Great interest was displayed in these solitary isles with their dense tropical vegetation and also in the cargo vessel off our Starboard bow, the Skipper and Navigator thought that she was going to run aground on the reef, but they finally decided that she was OK.

Mr. Jack Kennedy also left the ship in Sydney but we think he is going up to the same forward area.

Tuesday  
March 27th

B.D.  
\*

Wednesday  
March 28th

Thursday  
March 29th

Maintenance continued today and, in anticipation of the practice exercise arranged for tomorrow, it was hoped to get all aircraft serviceable. Arrangements had been made to get all Corsairs and Avengers from the Hangar on to the Flight Deck so that engines could be run and wings spread to enable painting to be completed at long last.

During the forenoon we were lectured by LCDR Fields RN on the new R.T. procedure now being used in the British Pacific Fleet; though fairly complicated in structure, the whole thing was logically explained and we will be expected to use the system tomorrow. In addition S/Lt(A) Likeling RNVR of 848 (Observer) was good enough to show us a selection of photographs of Jap Cruisers and give us a bit of gen.

The aircraft we wanted to paint and run up did not begin to appear on deck until around 1400, but eventually we had them all being finished off and the C.O. went around inspecting them himself. Some trouble was experienced with engines. Number 112 for example, S/Lt Blaikie's cab had been giving trouble with oil leaking from the propeller - which was the fifth installed in as many days. Finally it was lashed down and given a full power trial by P.O.(E) Smith who nearly blew six depth charges over the side.

This time however he was pleased to report the full serviceability. We did not have such luck with No. 120(S/Lt Reeve) who upon running up found that one side of the magneto had apparently gone u/s. KD 333, now Number 124(S/LT Humphries) was readjusted on the C.S.U. to give 2700 R.P.M. instead of 2500; the full power test showed 2800 down to only 1000, so P.O. Callow set about making a further adjustment after which he considered further running unnecessary.

S/Lt J. Lovell RNVR of 848 gave a lecture on some of the Japanese types of aircraft and arrangements have been made for more gen sessions.

14 Corsairs of 1841 and some Avengers took off today about 0900 to carry out exercises in R.T. with the ship and each other, and also patrol formation and camera attacks, quarter and rolling variety. There was no more than 28 knots over the deck and some take offs were a little shaky owing to the high rate - which it should be noted was by far the best timing yet achieved.

Unfortunately, owing to the fact that S/Lt(A) Blaikie took off quite early in the deck park - to air test Fergie's cab and not to take part in exercise, he was followed tenaciously by about six types who tried to join up on him, in spite of the fact he did his best to get away by barrel rolling and with quite high boost on. The gaffe was eventually realized and the flights did get together and do their patrol formations and camera attacks.

By this time the ship, which yesterday was off the coast of N.E. New Guinea and New Britian had now come to within visibility of the Admiralty Isles, in fact most of the boys flew over the airstrips which had been cut out on the reefs surrounding the main island. There are apparently both American and British fields we were told by Commander Ops to land at Ponam if we got into trouble: why McLisky didn't do this is a mystery since he had a hydraulic leak & we talked of iced Coca Cola and milkshakes at the American fields. Instead everyone landed on satisfactorily immediately after the 1842 types had taken off. Some of us were rather low on fuel. S/Lt's Brown, Reeve, Bastien & Harrison did not fly, S/Lt Humphries flew as Number 2 on S/Lt Morten.

In the afternoon 'Red' Middleton of 1842 pranged his Corsair landing on by bursting a tyre and hitting the wheel on the Port gun turret, knocking off the u/c leg. A piece of metal from the prop cut S/Lt Spencer's leg and 16 stitches were considered necessary. So now we have two u/s Batsmen since Lt. Bob Joyce is also in Sick Bay. Previously a TBF piloted by S/Lt Bob Mean pulled out it's hook on a wire, and crossing the two barriers which had been lowered, almost went over the side. The Port <sup>wind</sup> wrote off another of S/Lt Mills Gun Directors and set on fire, but this was very quickly dealt with by the fire dept. In a way it was a useful ex. for the A.H.P. though in action it would probably have been pushed right over.

In the evening, when we were anchored inside the reef, within sight of the surf and tropical palms, bathing over the side was piped and quite a few types

Friday  
March 30th



were soon cooling themselves off in the clear water. Later on the same evening a spontaneous party to which the Captain was invited almost as soon as he put his head in the ante-room, turned out to be rather a drunken orgy, and as it coincided with the birthday of a ships company Officer, the ante-room around 2300 was looking rather grim. Perhaps this is why S/Lt's Blaikie of our own and Wally Stradwick of 1842 decided to drink their beer in the passage. Unfortunately the Commander who had been seen wearing a nauseated look all evening, and who had already been gunning for types having dinner in khaki, and others singing at dinner, took Harry dinkers and stopped the wine bill of these two for some time - 14 days I think. Other offenders included S/Lt's McLisky, Harrison, Wood & Morten; it seems that the Squadron will be a little more sober now - until the next time! What 1842 will do with their sleeping partners on April 1st(their anniversary) remains to be seen.

Saturday  
March 31

It began to rain at approximately 0400 this morning, very heavily with thunder and lightning accompanying it, and a strong wind which blew it(the rain) across the Quarterdeck, drenching some of the types asleep there. Later on the rain abated somewhat but until 1100 it continued with slight showers and bad visibility.

We said goodbye to S/Lt CHGO Hall RNVR(Snowy) who is today going on his way back to Sydney. For some time he has been suffering from impetigo with severe rashes on his face, arms and legs: so much so that he is not fit to fly. As this has happened each time we have entered the tropics, the Medico's have decided that it is useless and so unfair to keep him on board.

We put to sea again around 1130 and soon visibility improved slightly, we had no Corsairs flying so Lt Richardson was able to handle all aircraft coming on board, which were Avengers flown off earlier, and one flew on to replace that prang yesterday. A new Corsair for 1842 was flown on board by S/Lt Keith Quilter.

We are now presently bound for the Philippines and should soon be entering the Northern Hemisphere.

Easter Sunday  
April 1st

The ship crossed the line again at approx 0340 this morning, but we are not yet North of the Sun which is on it's way to Cancer. However we do expect the weather to be a little cooler.

The following Pilots took off to do high altitude work:- Lt Gray, S/Lt's Crosland, Ferguson, Harrison, Reeve, Brown and Blaikie. They carried out camera attacks on ship and escorts. The total flying time was 17 hrs 30. Deck landings were satisfactory though there is a tendency for the approaches to become rather straight.

A general Make & Mend followed in the afternoon and was much appreciated.

Monday  
April 2nd

The only Pilots of the Squadron to fly today were S/Lt's Morten and Humphries who took off to carry out an exercise with six Avengers. It had been arranged for us to do camera attacks and for the Avenger's T.A.G.'s to try and 'shoot us down', though we were mildly surprised to learn that they had not carried out any previous exercise of this kind. Cloud base was around 2500' and attacks soon commenced: however owing to a misunderstanding, the T.B.F.'s began evasive action very quickly and few orthodox runs were made. After this was finished the two Corsairs carried out an interception and finally dummy attacks on the ship and escort.

The camera films of the previous day's shooting at 25,000 ft was shown in the Gunroom and the general differences relevant to high altitude work were noted. The tendency it seemed was to open fire too soon.

Tuesday  
April 3rd

In the morning we put up eight planes flown by the C.O. & S/Lt's Asbridge, Anderson, Morten, McLisky, Glading, Maitland and Wood. They also went to 25,000' & some complained of excessive Oxygen which seemed to produce a general feeling of hilarity. They also carried out attacks on the towed Fog Buoy, and it was observed that the shooting was quite accurate. (The Quarterdeck Division are now concerned at the rate these targets are being lost & Lt Hamilton RNR threatens the use of an explosive type.)

After about 2½ hrs there was a general panic to land on as quickly as possible since most of the a/c had been using their reserve supply of petrol for some time:

they came on in fair style, Lt Anderson doing a very Bigg-Wither approach. Some of the kites had less than 20 gallons left, but everyone got on safely.

During the afternoon when 1842 were flying, some of the Squadron Pilots, at the request of Guns did spotting from behind the pom poms and Predictors to report on the efficiency of the guns team's - which were following the attacks of the Corsairs as they came toward the ship.

Around 1700, 1842 Squadron was unlucky enough to have one of it's Armourers put up the full black in the Hangar. During a D.I. on Corsair No. 122, A.M. Crooks, a new type who only joined in Sydney, failed to clear the Port guns and gave the order to press the firing switch to check solenoids. L.A.M. Smith(L) who was in the cockpit at the time obliged. The Port guns were actually charged and a number of rounds were fired. Three Corsairs were damaged, one badly - No. 128; it had rudder, fuselage and cockpit shot up, instruments smashed, and is, so far as we are concerned, probably a write off. No. 124 had a ricochet through the elevator. One of 1842 cabs had it's propeller blade almost shot away close to the center - a most regrettable incident! Crooks is on remand now and his punishment will come later.

We are approaching the Philippines on an approximate course of 345°, and as from 0800 today, the Squadron is supplying standby aircraft and Pilots until 1000 when they - S/Lt's MacKinnon and Reeve - will be relieved by 1842. From 1200 until 1500 the duty is taken by S/Lt's Morten, Humphries, Glading & McLisky.

We are now well in sight of the first islands, a few friendly aircraft including P.B.-M.'s have been seen. So far there has been no alert.

The morning was spent on maintenance of aircraft which must now be kept on the top line. Some will be run up on deck this afternoon.

A few of the Pilots assembled on the Q.D. for dinghy drill given by S/Lt Bastien and a number of serious points about baling out and ditching were discussed: among those who put forward constructive ideas was S/Lt Glading. S/Lt L.M. Reeve kindly volunteered to be launched with the dinghy into the canvas swimming pool and his reactions were carefully noted.

Around tea-time we were in a preliminary position in the Northern bay of Leyte Island, almost completely surrounded by the mountainous country. We could see H.M.S. UGANDA and also the aircraft supply Carrier H.M.S. UNICORN. at various dispersed stations were many U.S. ships including two Hospital ships and dozens of Tankers.

Whilst we are here off Leyte Island we must concentrate on our ground training including ship and aircraft recognition, the reading of operational reports, air tactical notes and generally polishing up on any subject on which we may find ourselves rusty. Lectures are being arranged and we will have a regular morning programme on these subjects. We will also do some V/S and practice R.T. in the buzzer room. At this time the ship will be taking on board various stores and putting the final touches to be prepared well for action; our Squadron maintenance crews will continue to bring their aircraft to first class condition.

During the early morning the ship moved to her new position which is close to H.M.S. UNICORN. Many Pilots spent their time on the Flight Deck among the aircraft and watching the various types flying around. Quite a few planes came to have a look at us, both American and British, including Lightnings, Corsairs, Beaufighters, Avengers and so on. There are so many different types constantly in the sky that it is an excellent chance to polish up on the Allied types.

A number of Officers went ashore in the afternoon at 1315 to have a look at the local colour: the trip made in a ship's M.C. took at least 90 minutes and some difficulty was experienced in finding a suitable berth. The village was Tacloban and not far away is the airstrip where the amount of traffic, particularly transport(Dakota's and Commando's) is great.

Life ashore was a combination of native and American, with Jeeps, bulldozers and trucks in great evidence; the natives were we thought inclined to be friend-

Wednesday  
April 4th

1130

lier than the Americans but maybe the latter thought we were looking for Schlitz and Coca Cola!

Owing to certain regulations concerning Duty Seaboats, we did not swim on the way back - anyhow the Americans do not consider the water safe hygienically.

The Captain informed the ships company that we would stay probably for about seven days.

All Pilots were kept busy during the morning by R.T. practice, V/S on the Flight Deck, and cine gun camera films. S/Lt Humphries films of the Avenger attacks seemed rather clueless but as he pointed out, evasive tactics began too soon (vide April 2).

The main feature of the afternoon programme was a talk from Commander Flying, but this was postponed.

Owing to causes unknown, S/Lt Blaikie missed a Parade and was awarded five days duty boy; this together with his valuable but exhausting work on stores, and his present state of alcoholic abstinence, might have deleterious effects on his customary joie de vivre were it not for the recent mail from Sydney which is keeping up his morale!

Our dear 'Tiff' - known to others as S/Lt Bastien, has left to go on board one of the American Hospital ships to have treatment for his face which is u/s from some kind of tropical eczema. The present position is not clear as to whether he will rejoin the ship, depending as it does on the progress of his cure. If he should not come along with us, we all wish him jolly good luck wherever he goes.

Another item of news about Pilots once attached to 1842 comes from signals recieved - to whit - S/Lt(A) C. Butterworth RCNVR is on his way back to rejoin ship after a leave at home in Canada of three months, and that S/Lt(A) R.W.H. Boyne RNVR, now fully recovered from his pneumonia is perhaps also returning. Though we do not know if this is definitely arranged.

Another full ground training programme including R.T. practice, an air recognition test and V/S on the Flight Deck. It is to be regretted that Lt R. Gray RCNVR - our Senior Pilot should have found himself so near the bottom of the ladder!

Lt's Anderson and Asbridge attended a homing lecture, and at midday all Pilots and Observers assembled on the Quarterdeck to listen to a talk from Commander Flying who had a few well chosen words to say to us generally about discipline, behaviour and duty, not omitting a reference to H.O.O.W & A.O.O.W., though saying nothing about the future, save that we would leave Leyte around the 12th and spend three days on general flying.

There was no Make & Mend, but a few Officers went ashore, this time finding a more salubrious place in the shape of a small island where one could drink Coke & beer: S/Lt(A) Glading came into the picture again! But then he has been working hard recently testing radio's, beacons and headsets & so deserved some recreation.

S/Lt(A) Harrison went sailing with S/Lt's Grossam and Sinclair - two contemporaries in the sporting world, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves in spite of having to row home through lack of wind. We are genuinely surprised to learn that this contingency was unforeseen by LCDR Britton who was also a member of the Whaler's crew! Evidently the Skipper got real gen from somewhere for he gave up the idea of taking out his gig!

S/Lt(A) D. Wood was on the Mess Decks this morning to stand Captain's rounds: everything went off satisfactorily and the Squadron as a whole was commended on the cleanliness of it's quarters.

The whole ship went to Divisions this morning at 1000, we had two or three American Officers (U.S.N.) present. The Captain inspected the Quarterdeck Division under Lt. E. Hamilton RNR and continued along the Starboard side. After the customary hymns and prayers he, the Captain, said a few words over the microphone about the forthcoming operations, talking also about the present Naval battle taking place between Allied and Japanese forces off the Ryukyu Island group. Referring to the suicide bombers now employed by the Japanese in great numbers,

Friday  
April 6th

Saturday  
April 7th

Sunday  
April 8th

he said the H.M.S. INDEFATIGABLE had been damaged by one which struck the Bridge; - later we learned from LCDR Flying that among the 20 killed was the A.E.O. and a Seafire Pilot. Further information was that the (H.M.S.) KG V had been attacked and the other two Carriers & the (H.M.S.) INDOMINABLE and (H.M.S.) VICTORIOUS were almost unscathed. We knew that the best of the Japanese Battleships, YAMATO, had been sunk with two or three Cruisers and Destroyers.

Ruck-Keene's attitude as stated is that our Gunners must engage these attacking aircraft until the very last moment, and that should he get as much as his eyebrows singed by one, than the guncrews would hear about it for the rest of the commission. This final sally was greeted with hearty laughter by ships company.

The afternoon was a Make & Mend with heavy zizzing types on the Q.D. A few were industriously energetic, S/Lt Maitland continued painting up his insignia. By this time most of the Pilots have their ideas on this subject and soon no doubt all the Corsairs will be carrying some motto as favour .- sporting types this afternoon - the \*C.O. & S/Lt Harrison.

The full ground school programme has been arranged, to cover the next five days if necessary. It included V.S., R.T., skeet shooting, recognition, etc.

The forenoon was taken up by the ground school training afore-mentioned, though the skeet arranged on the Flight Deck did not materialize because the Air Gunners 848 overran their time; a pity since such experts as S/Lt's Ferguson and Harrison had no opportunity to exhibit their skill. Dinghy drill was scrubbed in favour of a/c recognition, odd pictures shown on the epidiascope not very effectively by S/Lt Humphries who could not always remember the names. However, some good may come of it!

As the lecture closed, in came the Captain saying-"Well chaps, we're off! No drinking tonight, all right!! Don't forget to know all your orders and watch your R.T. procedures. I'll skin the Pilot who leaves his transmission on , all right?!"

The afternoon was taken up by getting the odd letter written home and helping to censor the ship's mail so that there would not be too much at breakfast.

From general remarks it seems that we are short of various spaces for a/c. If we are going to stay out for any length of time. This may give snags. It is expected that each aircraft will fly around 50 to 60 hours per month. Quite a lot of operational flying!

The ground school training programme is now of course up the creek completely: Pilots will have to do what they can for themselves individually when they have the opportunity. This morning was spent by most Pilots around their aircraft, some of which are on deck for running up. We have acquired another Corsair to replace the one which was shot up in the Hangar. The wreck was lightered off yesterday. The new kite is being worked upon, harmonizing and so forth, but there was no opportunity to allow S/Lt Reeve to swing the compasses.

Lifebelts or jackets must now be carried all the time. Pilots are becoming interested in their jungle suits and backpacks, water bottles and so forth. All 'Action Station' signals are being tested.

It is not yet generally known when and where we will rendezvous the rest of the Fleet.

This afternoon none of our Pilots flew, but 1842 sent up some aircraft; after their exercises had been completed they returned and landed on normally.

S/Lt L.M. Reeve has taken over the duties of Safety Equipment Officer in S/Lt Bastien's absence. Lt's Asbridge and Anderson are acquainting themselves with general Squadron routine, and also performing the duties of Assistant Maintenance and Ordnance Officers respectively.

Our Administration P.O. Philbrick was unfortunate to be caught smoking on the Flight Deck near an aircraft. He was placed on charge and passed from the Commander to the Captain and back again. Finally he was awarded 14 days stoppage-of-leave, which in this area, does not mean a great deal. Regret to state that

\* Who let go the main halliard? - and was boarded by the Skipper!

Monday  
April 9th

Tuesday  
April 10th

Addition  
The ship cast off and got underway at 1200 today.

Wednesday  
April 11th

one of our Leading Hands L.A.F. Kennedy has lost his rank due to some so called joke on A.M. Graham. Apparently one does not joke on the question of ship's Rum!

Six Pilots, S/Lt's Morten, Humphries, Brown, Lt Anderson, S/Lt's Maitland and Wood flew this afternoon doing camera gun attacks, patrol formation and dummy attacks on the escorts. We broke off at 1400. Later S/Lt's Ferguson & Harrison went up on C.A.P. Everyone returned about 1615 & though by common agreement none of the landings were particularly bright, they were safe.

In the evening around 2045 Major Banbe R.A. gave us a talk on the present situation in the Pacific, with particular reference to that area to the N.E. of Formosa in which we are particularly interested. American Task Force 58 is engaging the Ryukyu group of Islands, covering invasion forces and so on. No. 51 is covering the Sakishima Gunto group, and we are following in their footsteps. In addition, when No. 51 cannot find enough work to do, it looks for shipping in the S. China Sea and attacks Formosan airfields and railways.

An item of interest from Tuesday's note was the fact that at 1240, precisely as we were leaving Leyte, Mr. Jack Kennedy of Chance Vought came alongside in a highpowered Motor Launch. Observers on the Q.D. saw frantic signalling from shore, and the ship hove to for a few minutes whilst Jack tied up alongside, sent up his baggage and climbed the ladder with the utmost celerity, to the forceful exhortations of the Commander who appeared to prefer to dispense with all assistance in carrying out this manoeuvre.

We are now in company of H.M.S. SPEAKER, which is carrying Hellcats, several Destroyers and Tankers. Our course is Northward and today the temperature is surprisingly low for we are still in the tropics roughly opposite the Northern tip of Formosa. Due to our position & in accordance with orders, we have duty Carrier with standby C.A.P. at States 11 & 12. Until Noon today the duty flight is Morten's crowd, and from 1200 until 1600 today they are actually at State 11. As a/c may be flown off at any time after about 0530, the trouble begins when taxi Pilots have to be piped.

It was decided to squirt two Pilots, S/Lt's Morten & Humphries today at 1400, to carry out C.A.P. duties; however the ship was unable to manoeuvre at that time owing to oiling from the Tanker being in progress. At about 1430 the State 11 was altered to State 12, so the duty Pilots were able to leave their a/c. At the moment the question of accelerated take offs present a difficulty, namely that of being able to get one's head against the pad, since the presence of the backpad on the shoulders makes this impossible.

All Pilots have now been equipped with the full issue - American backpads, British Mae West backpads, rubber, canvas and tin water bottles, poncho's (reversible), maps and jungle guides. The very serious question is just where one is going to put it all. Too much in the pack puts a Pilot's nose too close to the gunsight! Pockets are being rapidly sewn on to jungle trouser legs.

In the evening we were given a talk by LCDR Hodges USNR who has been out in the Pacific off and on since 1942 - when things were really tough! He was very interesting - talking about evasion, escape, and methods of interrogation used by the Japanese. It seems just possible that they are softening up their treatment - just a little!

This morning we had Pilots standing by from 0530. Avenger a/c were squirted around 0800 and the S.D.O. S/Lt Maitland organized his taxi Pilots. Later on Pipe MacKinnon took up Blaikie, McLisky & Glading on C.A.P. The deck park was moved for'd and when they landed on there was no a/c ready for immediate take off; consequently some delay ensued when an unidentified a/c appeared on the screen. SPEAKER promptly sent off four and just as ours were ready for take off, these returned having established the identity as friendly. Reports were received that boys in the main part of the Fleet could be heard using the R.T. so maybe we will soon be seeing them. We should have rendezvous them this morning at 1600, & since that time have apparently been patrolling an area,

Visitors came aboard from H.M.S. VICTORIOUS including LCDR Tritton DSC RNVR.

Thursday  
April 12th  
Southern Life

Friday  
April 13th &  
Saturday  
April 14th

C.O. of 1833 Squadron, Lt Jess RANVR now Acting C.O. of 854 Squadron, and other Officers. The Corsair was JT 363 which caused much comment amongst us owing to it's age. The word was passed on to the three C.O.'s who had a session together. H.M.S. ILLUSTRIOUS is going back to Leyte at least to have repairs carried out - damage caused by the suicide bomber. She takes with her the Corsair Squadrons 1830 & 1833 and the Avenger 854 including 'Spike Reynolds' of the original 40th Pilots(Vincent).

Flying off and landing on Avenger A/S patrols caused the deck park to be taxied for'd & towed back many times. So that, together with C.A.P., standby flights, State 11 & 12, all Pilots were in demand most of the time. Early calls from 0530 onward have been organized and standing by carried out until dusk.

There is at the moment some comment on the question of night Watches in the Hangar interfering with the efficiency of Pilots scheduled to fly the next day. So far nothing has been decided.

On Friday the radio gave out the news of the death of President Roosevelt; this came as a shock to everyone on board. A memorial service was organized on the Flight Deck at 1515 and the ships company paid a tribute to this great man.

On Saturday evening the film called 'The Fighting Lady' was shown to all aircrew in the Wardroom, in technicolour, showing a complete cross section of life on board an American Carrier, made at the time of the strikes against the Mariana's including Truk and Marcus Islands. It was full of good strafing attacks and Air-to-Air gunnery attacks. Everyone was very impressed both by the photography and material in the film. The prangs of injured aircraft coming back on board were especially spectacular. Many Carriers were filmed including the new WASP and HORNET - the ESSEX Class and the 'CABOT'.

The Captain informed ships company that the ship would be going into action on Monday, but he has not yet indicated the target.

The Squadron provided Pilots in Readiness State 11 and State 12 during the early morning and late afternoon. The highlight was the visit of Vice Admiral Sir Philip Vian K.C.B. D.S.O. during the forenoon: he was flown on in an Avenger and met first the Captain and Heads of Departments. He spoke for a little time to the aircrews confirming the target as the Sakishima Gunto - neutralization of - since the airfields are being used as staging posts to the island of Formosa. He then broadcast to ships company.

The C.O. gave a talk after lunch to all Pilots, passing on general hints and guidance for the next two days, stressing the necessity for aircraft to stay in pairs & the crime of leaving an escort flight to knock down the odd Jap. Modifications possible in take offs and landing on procedures were discussed, and Pilots were reminded of the absolute necessity of giving accurate fixes for any of our planes which may have to ditch.

It was noted that among those who did not look forward to long spells of C.A.P. was S/Lt McLisky, but maybe he will have an opportunity of getting his first kill soon. What is worrying most Pilots is how hard the parachute (and water bag) is going to seem after four hours.

S/Lt Glading suffered the torment of Tantalus at the film show last night - watching Americans eating ice cream and drinking sodas, - now he is wondering about his twelve hours sleep!

Ruling from Commander Flying to the effect that Watch duties are being scrubbed for the time being.

On the Flight Deck the troops are busy arming-up, cleaning cockpit covers, fitting belly tanks, and doing the last minute odd jobs.

Rumour has it that 'H' hour is 0600 tomorrow and our first flight is to be off at H-1/2, which puts briefing around 0430! Time we were all in bed!

The general plan of attack on Sakishima Gunto was as follows. During the two days Monday and Tuesday, eight strikes would be sent off about 80 miles to the South East of the islands, the targets being the airfields on Ishigaki and

Camera gun films of attacks by S/Lt Morten's flight were shown in the Gunroom at 1400. Generally these were good and showed the tendency to improve over the last two weeks.

Sunday  
April 15th

Later

Monday  
April 16th

Myako and such installations as Hangars, radio and aircraft control stations, not omitting the destruction of any enemy aircraft in the air or on the ground. Avengers were to do the majority of the bombing and Corsairs to provide escort and air patrol over the Fleet and the target area. Hellcats from the INDOM and Seafires from the INDEFAT also provided C.A.P. and Fireflies also from the INDEFAT were flying with R.P.'s looking for any enemy shipping off the islands.

The first planes off on Monday were eight Corsairs from our Squadron to act as C.A.P. for four hours.

'H' hour was 0630 and we were due to be airborne at h- $\frac{1}{2}$ , consequently these two flights were called at about 0430 and briefed at 0515 in A.O.R. There was no confusion and our take off was very efficient, though with belly tanks full for the first time in months, the amount of sinking experienced by the Pilots was considerable and a little shakey.

The C.O. with Blaikie, Glading and McLisky were at 3000 ft. These two flights kept up C.A.P. until 1000: belly tanks lasted 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours but were not dropped owing to the fact we have none to spare.

Strike A consisted of Avengers against Hirara airfield on Myako Island and we sent off 12 Avengers (848 Squadron) led by LCDR Percy. Planes from the FORMIDABLE all returned safely with photographs of the damage to roads and runways.

Meantime, at 0930 Lt Gray with his flight, Crosland, Maitland & Wood flew off as scheduled to take over the C.A.P. and at 1000 the first eight came down and landed on, having clocked exactly 4 hours each. The policing continued, MacKinnon, Asbridge, Ferguson & Reeves from 1230 until 1515, and the C.O. with his flight put in their second spell from 1545 until about 1910.

By this time it was dusk, the Sun set at 1900 approx and the days flying was completed, with a total number of 75 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, shared by 16 Pilots.

On board, the ship was brought to Action Stations and "Alarm to Arms" was sounded off very often. Bogies were tracked on the Radar screen but FORMIDABLE's fighters had no opportunity of intercepting one.

1842 Squadron provided the target air patrol and it was during the last strike of the day on Myako airfield that their C.O. LCDR GARLAND D.S.C. RNVR was hit by light flak during a strafing run and crashed into the sea just off shore.

The job of Squadron Duty Officer was ably filled by S/Lt Harrison who organized parachutes, taxi Pilots and aeroplanes very efficiently. Tomorrow he will be flying and S/Lt Humphries will have this unenviable position!

The flying off and landing on always worked well, with little or no panic on deck; the ships company were kept constantly informed of the status quo by the action commentator (Captain's Sec.).

Most of the Squadron types were rather browned off with the fact that they had been appointed only as C.A.P. and had had little to do except stooge over the Fleet. Air opposition over the target however had been non-existent. Another objection was that the other Carriers had been given most of the interceptions of the odd snoopers which were around most of the time, in particular 'Limbo' was favoured. As a gentle introduction to Fleet duties and operational flying however, the day's work was just the answer: no doubt we will in the near future have more exacting tasks to perform! Tomorrow it is hoped, at least one flight will go over the target and, though we cannot like 1842 carry bombs, we may be asked to go in on the odd strafing run.

The programme for the Squadron today turned out to be the same as yesterday's; we provided the C.A.P. in company with Hellcats and Seafires, but our Pilots were vectored out oftener, though no interception of enemy aircraft was made by us. We on deck, at about 0630 were informed by the action commentator that one of our fighters had shot down a Zeke 32, but subsequently it was stated that a Corsair Pilot from the VICTORIOUS was the lucky man.

Tuesday  
April 17th

Our first eight were off at 0555 comprised of two flights, Lt Gray's and S/Lt MacKinnon's, and they did not land until just after 1000, by which time Morten's flight with Harrison in place of Humphries (now duty boy).

It had been intended to keep the C.O.'s flight at State 11 until 1230 when they would fly off, but the presence of several bogies resulted in the C.A.P. being strengthened, so the C.O. went off at the same time as Morten's.

At 1130 we had a big flap and Humphries was very smartly told to stand by for immediate take off with S/Lt Bell as his No. 2. Engines were running, briefing was indeed short, but before LCDR Hawkes could bring down the flag, the flight was washed out and the situation reverted to normal. It transpired that S/Lt Morten had made a forced landing on the VICTORIOUS with a breakdown in his hydraulic system; this was probably the reason for the flap.

S/Lt MacKinnon's flight went off at 1230 and took over C.A.P. until 1610 and Lt Gray's flight were up from 1530 until 1900. In this way we supplied 24 parties to the day's action.

Around 1530 S/Lt Morten took off from VICTORIOUS in his repaired Corsair and landed on, bringing the total flying hours for the Squadron to exactly 90.

1842 Squadron during the day sent dive bombers out to the airfields; their take offs with two 500 lbs and a belly tank was rather staggering & later they were fitted with one only.

848 Squadron on Strike C for the second day lost one of their Avengers over the target Myako; apparently the plane was hit by flak and according to the report of the Observer, S/Lt Goss, the Port side was quickly set on fire. Goss called the Pilot - S/Lt Whitehead but got no answer and assumed that he had bough it, so he then called the T.A.G. and told him to bale out; he himself did this immediately afterwards at less than 1000 ft. An accompanying Avenger circled the spot where the plane went in and called base giving details. Fireflies went out to keep ships & boats away from Goss who was in the water about 1000 yards offshore, and the Walrus Air-Sea Rescue plane took off to try and pick him up. The rescue was made under rifle fire from the shore, but it was done without mishap and the Walrus Pilot was cheered as the plane came back and landed on it's Carrier.

S/Lt Morten brought back news of types known to most of our Pilots, at present on the VIC. We were sorry to hear that S/Lt's 'Paddy' Burns and 'Gina' Roberts had been lost at sea whilst on operations.

A.C.1. sent a general message of congratulations to the ship on her performance, and the Captain added his own remarks of satisfaction with all Depts.

The crews worked hard and long and had the satisfaction of knowing that their kites were actually at work, though no doubt they would have welcomed at least one enemy victim. Not one round was fired however, so the Armourer's day is yet to come.

Strike D on today's programme did not take place as it was judged that the airfields had been neutralized by the previous attacks.

One of our aircraft was pranged on deck due to it's being allowed to run backwards in the deck park into the propeller of another. Generally the serviceability rate was high and at all times we had sufficient for the programme, though once we used one of 1842 in order to avoid ranging.

Considerable excitement was caused when 1842 Pilots landed on with 500 lb bombs which they had been unable to drop: one bomb fell off on landing & rolled up the Flight Deck to the island. Everyone went flat for a second, & then LCDR Hawkes ran up and handled it with great calm - who would be an A.G.O.?

Altogether the strikes achieved the object of rendering the island aerodromes inoperative, though for how long this state will continue is not known.

Most of the Pilots caught up on their sleep today, though Morten's flight provided State 11 from 0800 until 1000, when they were relieved. During the night we have joined up with the Fleet Train and were taking on stores and some mail from a Destroyer which had apparently just come up from Leyte.

Wednesday  
April 18th



According to the Captain, it is probable that in two days time we will return to the combat area for further action, but the situation is uncertain owing to ~~shortage of spares and fuel (we have 13,000 gallons of petrol left).~~

During the afternoon a Make & Mend was given to some of the ratings and many of the Pilots spent time on the Quarterdeck.

Thursday  
April 19th

With knowledge of A.C.1.'s intention to return for at least another days attacks on the islands, the day was spent in getting as many aircraft on deck as possible and bringing them up to full serviceability again. The number of flying hours on some planes has quickly mounted up and very shortly many of them will be due for 40\* inspections.

Friday  
April 20th

The programme of T.B.F. strikes and F4U-2 Fleet Air Patrols was very much the same as on the other two days operations, and nothing is less eventful for the Hellcats and Corsairs, since the Pilot's had even fewer interceptions, none of which proved fruitful.

H hour was again 0630 but the first C.A.P. from FORMIDABLE, comprised of Morten's flight from our Squadron, and a flight of four from 1842 led by Lt Clarke, took off at 0550 when it was rather dark with low gray clouds making visibility rather bad. After some confusion in the join up, the flights got started out and went to their respective altitudes, '42 at 20,000 ft and ourselves at 10,000. The whole four hour patrol was completely uneventful, and it was not until Lt Gray with his flight was airborne around 0930 that an unidentified a/c was picked up by the A.D.R. Following up the interception, this proved to be a Liberator.

The C.O. with Blaikie and Ferguson with Harrison acted as escort for the first Avenger strike, and during this time the last mentioned two Pilots with their camera took continuous vertical shots of the target. The pictures came out satisfactorily but were not quite so good as those from a later effort by Lt London of '42 who was fortunate enough to have a better light. The photographs were taken at 6,000 ft.

There was during the whole day a considerable amount of cloud which covered the area almost completely, the C.A.P.'s often could not see the Fleet but were accurately plotted by the A.D.R. which called up and gave them vectors when they were getting too far away.

During the afternoon the action commentator announced the loss of one of our Avengers which had ditched, the Pilot was S/Lt Forth and Observer S/Lt Reeks. It was believed that the complete crew had managed to get out and preparation was made to send off the Walrus accompanied by two of our Corsairs. However there was apparently difficulty in locating this crashed aircraft and the flight was not made. Later we were informed that the search had been handed over to the American Rescue Service and that there were hopes of a rescue being effected. The sea was rough with a fairly strong wind blowing, and we thought the aircrew would spend a rather uncomfortable night in the dinghy.

Apparently strikes A, B & C were satisfactory, and as soon as the last C.A.P. had landed on, around 1900, we began to withdraw.

A.C.1 made a signal saying that the operations were 'as good a three days operations as I have seen!!' which may be considered high praise for all.

Saturday  
April 21st

At breakfast today we were given the good news by the Captain that all three men of the Avenger had been rescued and were safely 'in our hands'. Everyone was naturally pleased at the good news.

The two Squadrons between them provided State 11 stand by Pilots from 0600 onwards as the Fleet steamed Southward to Leyte. We expected to reach the Philippines on Monday, but during this time it is unlikely that we will fly, unless of course we have to provide duty patrol, which at the moment seems to be done by the Hellcats.

We finished the State 11 with Morten, Crosland, Humphries and Maitland standing by until dusk. There was no flap.

During the evening LCDR Hedges USNR spoke over the broadcast system complimenting the ship on the recent action, paying tribute to the spirit of Officers and

and Men on board. However, he stressed the brevity of the engagement, illustrating his point with an example of an American Carrier which was operating continuously for over thirty days. He did say that in his opinion, we could do it too (of course it would have meant dehydrated potatoes after the first 10 days or so, & probably strict rationing of the beer!).

Sunday  
April 22nd

A fine day with practically no cloud: we are still on course to Leyte doing about 15 knots. The wind is Easterly and fresh. We have little or nothing to do today, except taxi the deck park when the two Avengers arrive, which are coming to bring 848 Squadron back up to strength. Just why the VICTORIOUS is giving them away is not generally known, though some would link this up with the fact that her rudder (the VIC that is) is damaged, and she may have to go in for repairs. According to reports, when she is knocking up speed into wind, sometimes she will unaccountably start turning and cause great confusion to all - especially so for taking off and landing on.

The Avengers arrived - three of them around 1530: we were disappointed to see that Don Frampton was not among the Pilots, but hope to see him soon anyway. They - the Pilots, soon had a cup of tea and were off again in one a/c, landing back aboard the VIC very shortly.

Apart from this one item of activity, the ship spent the afternoon on Make & Mend.

During the evening some of the late LCDR Garland's gear which was considered too delicate to pack was auctioned in the ante-room: it included a radio, a gramophone and records. S/Lt Wood secured the gramophone and some of the records, though the bidding was high. A memorial service had been held on the Quarterdeck earlier in the day and most of the aircrew from all Squadrons attended to pay their respects to the men we lost in the recent operations.

Monday  
April 23rd

Early in the morning we were again in sight of Leyte though the weather was bad, the rain and mist being very heavy so that little could be seen of the country - not that it was likely to hold much of interest to us! Entering harbour we were immediately astern of the INDOMITABLE and followed by VICTORIOUS and INDEFATIGABLE. It was not until approximately 1300 however that we came to our berth, by which time we could see the ships already at anchor, since the weather was gradually improving.

All together there are now nine Carriers here in all, including the four of us that took part in the strike against Sakishima Gunto, & the ILLUSTRIOUS. In addition there is the UNICORN and SPEAKER. The other two are not yet known to me but no doubt this news will be recorded later.

It seems highly probable that during the next few days - we expect to be here about five or six - we shall meet many Pilots of the original 40th Pilots to which most of us belonged, together with other acquaintances we have made during the last year or so. We have never before been in company with so many Carriers, and doubtless we will have the opportunities for having a closer look at some of them; in fact it will be surprising if the odd party is not organized. At least we have most of the stock of beer!

The other two Escort Carriers here in harbour with us are H.M.S. 'STRIKER' & 'FENCER'.

In the evening we stood by in the Wardroom to receive our first visitors from the ILLUSTRIOUS and among them were Bill Christie, Jerry Salmon, Matt Banbe, Johnnie Roberts, the Great Arthur Reynolds of Gisbourne, Arthur Smith, Norman Street and many others. There was quite a reunion party, and everyone had a jolly good time, except the H.O.O.W.

The thieving rats took the clock from the ante-room and also the bell clapper from the Q.D. We must arrange to collect these before the ILLUSTRIOUS leaves for the U.K. Most of the Pilots have done their time out here and will go back with the ship but we will probably take some of the newer types.

Tuesday  
April 24th

The Squadron is working tropical routine, loading stores, belly tanks, engines and airframe parts, carrying out 40 Star inspections on at least four more aircraft. This will make eight in all, and it is hoped that another four might possibly be done by A.R.D. and Squadrons and cabs are on the Flight Deck so there

is a maximum amount of light for the work to be done. The heat however is rather terrific, so much so that one can hardly touch any metal that has been standing in the Sun for any length of time.

A ground training programme for aircrews is being arranged by Commander(O) and will include morning periods of R.T., V/S, aircraft and ship recognition, etc.

During the afternoons, some ratings from the morning Duty Watch will be able to go ashore to Tacloban, though in the opinion of some who have already been, there is not much entertainment there, only dust, heat, Jeeps & trucks. At one of the smaller islands there is an Officer's Club where beer is sold and where swimming is safe.

The evening saw most of the Squadron types paying a return visit to the ILLUSTRIOUS where they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, meeting still a few more Pilots whom they had known. Gummy Godson was there and Tritton, C.O. of 1833. We found their ship's company types very decent and friendlier than our own. We didn't find our clock!

On the way back some of the boys stopped off at the VICTORIOUS for a few minutes.

Ground training began this morning with R.T. & V/S, followed by an a/c rec. period given by S/Lt Lovell of 848. It is quite noticeable to what extent the Pilots have improved in this. Generally everyone is familiar with all types: S/Lt Glading has a 'Myrt' obsession, but no doubt this will disappear.

Major Banbes arranged a lecture on the functioning of the F24 camera and control box. As yet we have only two a/c fitted viz 121 & 122 - S/Lt's Ferguson & Harrison. We have now seen the photographs taken by these Pilots and the results were quite good. No doubt each one of the remaining four will have some experience soon in the operations in flight.

The remainder of our stay in Leyte's San Pedro Harbour was along very similar lines to the preceding days. By this time we had met almost everyone we had known on previous courses, and a few more besides. Life in the evenings settled down just a little, though one could always see the odd type on board, over from the VIC, INDOM, INDEFAT and, last but not least, from ILLUSTRIOUS.

With reference to the Q.D. bell clapper, though Lt Hamilton RNR tore his hair out, it took a signal from the Commander to recover this trophy, though a clock was brought on board one evening by an 848 Pilot, to replace the one taken from the ante-room.

Generally speaking, despite the terrific heat, which seemed to be at a peak in our own Wardroom and ante-room, a good time was had by all, and there were parties on every ship, well up to F.A.A. standards.

Among the other healthier activities was sailing. There were odd trips in the Whalers with ships company types to Telosa beach, though most people seemed to prefer the Motor Cutters: and there was one large sailing regatta, in which there were about 20 Whalers and odd dinghys, gigs, and some I could not identify. The ship distinguished herself by getting home the first two - number one being the Chief Gunners Mate, and number two the Captain in his gig. Fifth place was taken by another of the ship's Whalers in which were S/Lt Harrison ably assisting or assisted by S/Lt's Sinclair & Bradsbern of ships company. According to their unbiased report, but for a stroke of bad luck, not going on one beat far enough to get them round the tyne - by a mere ten yards, which made them have to go about again, they would have walked into third place.

At the beach, with the aid of the Motor Cutter, demonstrations of power surfing were given on two afternoons. There was also a slight incident of beaching the Cutter itself!

In spite of the fact that the A.I.R. was in great demand (Capt Van Marle seems to do a lot of hush-hush work there lately), the ground training dept. arranged to organize the mornings for V/S, R.T. & aircraft recognition classes, though for the second time we missed our skeet period - again to the chagrin of those experts Ferguson & Harrison of Dekheila fame.

S/Lt Bastien returned to the Squadron, almost cured of his skin trouble and

Wednesday  
April 25th

Thursday  
April 26th  
to 30th

Late Summary

certainly looking much healthier, his stay on board the Hospital ship seems to have done him a lot of good. We have also acquired two more Pilots who have already had some operational experience out here, S/Lt's Blade and Abbott. In addition, the Captain was very pleased to inform us that he had finally succeeded in getting back to the ship S/Lt's Hartshorne and Howe. Howe will go to 1842 once more.

To complete the review on the change in the personnel of the Squadron is the going away of S/Lt McLisky, who rendered himself u/s by falling on his arm in the aftermath of one of our parties, causing the lump which he has always had on his right forearm to give him trouble. The Medical Staff on board this ship sent him to the Hospital ship for an investigation, and an operation to remove the offending lump was decided upon. Mac returned around Monday with his arm bandaged and was declared unfit for flying duties for at least one month. It was obvious that he might as well now commence his overdue leave at home(Whangarei, N.Z. - as if anyone doesn't know!), and signals began to flash. It was almost at zero hour, the evening before we sailed, that confirmation came through granting leave and travelling time, and with his gear McLisky went on board the LOTHIAN for disposal - eventual passage to New Zealand.

The Captain sent A.C.I. a signal expressing his wish to have Mac rejoin us later, giving him a good write-up as a Pilot. We hope his arm will be O.K. soon, and that he will enjoy his leave to the full. About this there is little doubt! Geoff Hartshorne is now flying on Bob Gladings wing so, since "the Eyes of the Fleet" have gone, Bob better go - with Geoff on night intruder work!

30/4/45

Here is the Squadron as it appears in flights:-

- |                                 |        |                      |       |
|---------------------------------|--------|----------------------|-------|
| 1 LCDR(A) Bigg-Wither           | RN     | 5 Lt(A) Gray         | RCNVR |
| 2 S/Lt(A) Blaikie               | RNVR   | 6 S/Lt(A) Crosland   | RNVR  |
| 3 S/Lt(A) Glading               | RNZNVR | 7 S/Lt(A) Maitland   | RNVR  |
| 4 S/Lt(A) Hartshorne            | RNZNVR | 8 S/Lt(A) Reeve      | RNVR  |
| 9 S/Lt(A) MacKinnon             | RNVR   | 13 S/Lt(A) Morten    | RNVR  |
| 10 S/Lt(A) Asbridge             | RCNVR  | 14 S/Lt(A) Humphries | RNVR  |
| 11 S/Lt(A) Ferguson             | RNVR   | 15 S/Lt(A) Brown     | RNVR  |
| 12 S/Lt(A) Harrison             | RNVR   | 16 S/Lt(A) Anderson  | RCNVR |
| 17 Spare Pilots S/Lt(A) Wood    | RNVR   |                      |       |
| 18 Spare Pilots S/Lt(A) Bastien | RNZNVR |                      |       |
| 19 Spare Section S/Lt(A) Blade  | RNVR   |                      |       |
| 20 Spare Section S/Lt(A) Abbott | RNVR   |                      |       |

Monday

The ship is fully loaded with stores, etc: the Bridge and island group generally is cluttered with belly tanks for Corsairs; they hang from every conceivable position. What will happen to them in a very high wind remains to be seen, but the Skipper is very pleased to have so many on board. At least as far as we are concerned they are also in the Wardroom Flat - along conveyors, in corners, so that we now do not expect the Admiral and his Staff - there simply would not be any place for Subbies to sleep!

Ships in company:-

<u>CARRIERS</u>	<u>BATTLESHIPS</u>	<u>CRUISERS</u>	<u>DESTROYERS</u>
FORMIDABLE	KG V	GAMBIA	URSA
INDOMITABLE	HOWE	UGANDA	KEMPENFELT
VICTORIOUS		BLACK PRINCE	WRANGLER
INDEFATIGABLE		EURYALUS	URCHIN
		ARGONAUT	NAPIER
		SWIFTSURE	WESSEX
			NORMAN

Tuesday  
May 1st

At approximately 0615 we proceeded out of San Pedro Harbour with the rest of the Fleet: unfortunately, owing to a slight oversight on the part of the Cypher Dept., we did not stream paravanes. This called for some comments from the Captain but no harm was done.

I think we all were glad to get away from Leyte, not only on account of the lack of social life, but also because of the intense heat and the high humidity, which made life beneath decks only just bearable. It was good to be on the Flight Deck with a decent wind coming over the bows. Many of our a/c were on deck, with 40\* Inspections completed, some waiting for final engine running. It is expected that by this evening we will have full serviceability with the exception of No.118 which is having an engine change.

We are on a Northern course away from the Philippines, and it is assumed that we are going in the direction of Formosa and Sakishima Gunto. Bombardment by the heavy guns of KG V & HOWE may take place, in which case we should get some spotting experience.

At 1500 or thereabouts Capt. Van Marle of the South Staffs gave us a Chinese flag with the appropriate messages in characters, for use in case we are forced down on the mainland.

A number of Avengers flew off in the afternoon & landed on after flying for less than an hour; no Corsairs flew off at all. Tomorrow we are having a balbo made up from aircraft from all Carriers, complete with group and strike controllers. This mock strike should give us some idea of what the real thing may be like.

Wednesday  
May 2nd

It had been arranged that some Avengers were to do exercises around 0400 this morning, landing on in the dark (with only the light of the full moon) but owing to a complete lack of wind, the scheme was scrubbed at the last minute. Consequently, the types specially selected from this Squadron for taxiing purposes were not required at this ungodly time much to their relief. Consequently, everyone except the A.O.W.'s were able to get their heads down early.

In the morning the aircraft were ranged after the morning patrol had been flown on.

The practice strike consisted of about 48 Avengers, escorted and covered by about 64 Corsairs, 12 Hellcats with various odd Fireflies and Seafires doing the work of enemy intruders, suicide bombers, attacking interceptions and so on.

We were briefed at 1000 by the C.O.: at 1100 we went to the A.O.R. to collect beacon cards, shackle groups, I.F.F. code numbers, call signs, etc. We learned that we had eight Corsairs u/s. Top 1 Squadron cover & eight at Top 2 Squadron, both divided into Red & Green flights. Thus:-

C.O.	a/c 111	} Top 1 Red Flight	Ferguson	a/c 121	} Top 1 Green Flight
Blaikie	112		Wood	126	
Glading	113		Blade	119	
Hartshorne	114		Abbott	122	
Gray	115	} Top 2 Red Flight	Morten	123	} Top 2 Green Flight
Crosland	116		Humphries	124	
Maitland	117		Brown	125	
Reeve	120		Asbridge	127	

Take off was at 1400 - slightly delayed - S/Lt Blaikie had a cut gun on the deck after about 10 minutes & had some trouble in getting started again. In spite of the fact that our deck range was by no means in order, our flights made rendezvous satisfactorily, only to waste about 45 minutes before the strike proceeded. R.T. was badly disciplined - much to the disgust of the strike controller - who through much bantering was unable to issue his orders at all, and finally threw in his hand. Cyclops a/c were amongst those who chattered least of all!

Our landing on was not bad, the C.O., Gray, Ferguson, Crosland and others all having good intervals, though Humphries crowded the circuit so much he was obliged to take 3 wave offs.

Unless the organization & execution of join up, etc. improves, it seems that our strikes will be a repetition of the shambles of Palembang.

S/Lt Maitland's belly tank did not work, but he conserved his fuel and after dropping his full tank, landed on with 30 gallons in reserve. S/Lt Reeve made an emergency landing since his engine was cutting.

In the whole strike there must have been about 8 such emergencies.

Late A signal from A.C.I. reviewed the position of our Fleet Air organization, and we are pleased to note that H.M.S. FORMIDABLE excelled in almost all points: viz:-our take off intervals and time for form up, and our landing intervals. In only one point were we down, we had four emergency landings against three on the INDOMITABLE, the INDEFAT had 5 and the VIC as many as 10.

By comparison today's activities were curtailed. Very early S/Lt's Harrison and Anderson went up on Radar calibration; they were up to 120 miles away at 25,000 ft and reported excellent radio reception.

Thursday  
May 3rd

\*The Ferguson-Harrison combination were airborne for 4½ hr.

Later in the forenoon S/Lt's Blaikie and Hartshorne did exercises with the Fleet's guns which were sending up 30° throwoff shoots. Even from the deck, when our 4.5" were firing this was quite exciting and noisy, a group of Pilots on the Flight Deck playing with the medicine ball were almost deafened by a group, which fired suddenly almost across the deck. The first two Pilots, Harrison & Anderson, were brought down in line with some of the guns and had to be sent by INDOMITABLE to a safe sector. The offshooting was continued with two of '42 Pilots, who when they finished, beat up the Flight Deck and park(which was taxiing for'd) in a very workmanlike manner, though whether Wings quite approved is uncertain.

At 1500 we were given a short talk by Surgeon Commander Steel-Perkins RN (twitch Doc!) on the subject of survival by land and sea. He imparted the importance of carrying sufficient water, and of avoiding such diseases as dysentery, cholera & malaria.

Tomorrow we begin our next series of strikes. It includes Naval bombardment by Cruisers and Battleships, so there should be added interest. It appears that '42 will be spotting, not a reflection on the ability of 1841 in this aspect - we hope. For us, as before, there will be plenty of C.A.P.

Friday  
May 4th

ICEBERG OP

The first two flights took off at 0530 to carry out C.A.P. over the Fleet: they were S/Lt's Ferguson, Harrison, Blade and Abbott, and Lt Gray leading his flight with Crosland, Maitland and Reeve. S/Lt Wood was duty boy. These patroling a/c were not fortunate enough to see an enemy plane, though at one time Ferguson's flight was hot on the trail. Owing to the difficulty our F.D.O. experiences in accurately estimating heights - due probably to the fact that our Radar sets are not as modern as they might be, it is thought that the bogey was about 5000' above our fighters. INDOMITABLE confirmed this suspicion.

The ship sent out only one strike of Avengers to the islands, to bomb runways and these all returned safely.

Owing to the abortive chase by S/Lt Ferguson's flight, they had to get rid of belly tanks, all succeeded except the flight leader, and when he came on the deck away went the tank, the propeller cutting off the end as it did so. However it was almost dry & no fire resulted.

At about 1045 the next two flights went up, the C.O. leading Blaikie, Glading and Hartshorne, and S/Lt Morten leading Humphries, Brown and Anderson.

While in the air we could hear the C.O.'s flight being vectored out, though we learned subsequently that they had no luck: we in Morten's flight were soon vectored out, after climbing to 20,000 ft on a Westerly heading to intercept a bogie at about 40 miles range.

It must have been at that time - around 1145, that the ship was attacked by two suicide bombers, because for a long time we received no further vector and were steadily flying towards China! Ultimately we were taken over by 'Limbo' who vectored us back. We were unaware that the ship had been hit, and it was not until the two flights were ordered to land on other Carriers that we realized something was wrong. S/Lt's Brown, Anderson, Humphries and Blaikie landed on the VICTORIOUS and the C.O., S/Lt's Morten and Glading went to the INDOMITABLE.

Upon their return to the ship in the evening, the superficial damage appeared great. The Flight Deck had a big circular depression, fairly shallow however, just opposite the island and slightly to Port; the centre of the saucer-like hollow was covered over by a steel plate. The island was burnt and blackened, punctured by heavy shrapnel holes, and the heavy glass lights were mostly blown away. The Bridge had escaped with only a few broken windows, the A.L.O. office and the Met. office were in a state of chaos - full of debris. The for'd barrier was smashed up and apparently all our little dodgem cars used for towing had been badly burned. The belly tanks which had adorned the Bridge had all disappeared from the Port side.

We learned the story which had been pieced together. After a fly off, the deck park consisting mainly of Avenger, was being taxied for'd when the ship, being on the outside of the formation and action, was attacked by two Japanese suicide bombers which came in so low over the water that practically no armament was able to engage them. They were travelling extremely quickly and pulled up over the Flight Deck, exploded and burst into flames. The other was shot down between ourselves and the INDOMITABLE. Everything happened very quickly and it was unfortunate that at this moment the deck park was moving which meant that Pilots and Directors were exposed to shrapnel and blast.

About 50 Officers and Men were wounded, eight were killed outright including S/Lt(A) John Bell RNVR of 1842 Squadron and Lt Burgess RNVR of A.O.R., LCDR Knox A.E.O. was badly hurt in the face and two of 848 Pilots, Lt Gillie Potte and S/Lt D. Jupp DSC were badly wounded. Amongst the men hurt were P.O. Lamb of the A.H.P. P.O. Merritt and many others. Of our Squadron, the Duty Officer S/Lt(A) D. Wood RNVR was peppered by shrapnel and splinters, hurt in the legs, chest and face.

According to all reports, everyone worked hard to do what they could, the foremost being the Doctors, upon whom fell the greatest load.

848 Squadron lost most of their Avengers, only one remaining serviceable. At least two taxied themselves over the side, and about seven were disposed of in the same way since the extent of the damage was such that repairs were out of the question.

1841 Squadron lost number 118 - the engine change, which was almost complete. It received the full blast and had to be ditched.

In the late afternoon, when the Flight Deck was made serviceable again for landing, most of the Pilots returned with their aircraft from the VIC or INDOM where they had been operating some of their time doing State 11. S/Lt's Hartshorne of 1841, Stirling and Ewins and Lt Clarke of 1842, did not come back until next day.

So far as the one strike in which our Avengers participated during the forenoon was concerned, reports from A.C.1. said that it was moderately successful. In the morning while the Carrier stood off to the Southeast of the islands, the two Battleships, accompanied by all the Cruisers and some Destroyers - about 8 and 5 respectively, steamed to within bombardment range and opened fire on the aerodromes and gun emplacements. The spotting was done by LCDR Parker and Lt London of 1842, and recent signals state that the firing was good, but generally, Pilots reports were not very complimentary.

Note It was during this time, when the Carriers were left with only eight Destroyers to screen them, that the FORMIDABLE was attacked and hit. Soon afterwards the striking force returned and the whole Fleet was together again.

The second strike of the day by Avengers was carried out: gun emplacements and airstrips were bombed fairly effectively.

During the afternoon, Pilots of the VIC and FORMIDABLE on the Quarterdeck of the VIC, saw a Hellcat come in from up-Sun and got shot down by Gunners from these two Carriers and the HOWE. It was not a pleasant sight, especially as the aircraft was so obviously a Hellcat, though his approach was highly suspicious. He made a controlled ditching but, owing to his belly tank, nosed downward into the water. A Destroyer went over but I don't know if he was picked up.

The Task Force retired during the afternoon.

Saturday  
May 5th

Owing to our condition, we were asked to provide only a State 11 - eight a/c during the day beginning from first light. This was done, divided equally between Pilots of '41 & '42, but there was no panic and so no one was flown off - that is not until late afternoon when Lt Gray took off with his flight and S/Lt C. Cartledge's flight from '42. LCDR Hawkes manoeuvred the a/c slightly to Starb'd to clear the centre of the depression in the Flight Deck, but the Pilots had no trouble - not even they who, due to swerving slightly to Port, did get their wheel over the deepest part. A slight dipping of the Port wing, an extension on the oleo & sometimes a tiny wheel bounce were the only signs.

The day was spent clearing up debris, plugging up holes in the island's shell, and watching the other Carrier's take off & landing on a/c.

We had one item of interest. Lt Clarke was flown off the VICTORIOUS on C.A.P. and got a vector to intercept at 30,000 ft. The interception developed into a stern chase of about 40 miles at full boost, and finally the enemy a/c was sighted at one o'clock. It was rather a case of who got there first and S/Lt 'Chiefy' Stirling made it in Lt. Hammy Gray's cab No. 115. Only a two second burst from about 10° deflection was sufficient to cause the Nip to explode and Stirling, still with high closing speed, flew through the pieces. The Pilot was seen about 10,000 ft on the end of his parachute, but he was allowed to float down to the sea. Good Show! At last FORMIDABLE fighters get their first Jap!

Our casualties from the suicide bomber are spread about the ship, some in Sick Bay, including Jupp and Gillie Potte, both of whom are having plasma, the W.O.'s Mess and the ante-room.

The Fleet is retiring now to the oiling rendezvous; no doubt we shall collect replacement T.B.F.'s for 848 Squadron.

Sunday  
May 6th

We joined the Oilers in the early morning; the sea was rather choppy and the Destroyers which came alongside to carry out tasks of mail collection and delivery etc. did a good job of keeping station with us. The main operation was the transfer of patients to the Destroyer which was to take them over to the SPEAKER presumably, and from that ship they would eventually go to Hospital. This delicate task was carried out most satisfactorily by the companies of both ships; the tackle was rigged and the patients were passed over carefully at good intervals in either the Bosun's Chair, as in the case of S/Lt Wood, or in an improvised wooden cradle, as was the case of the more seriously injured men.

About twenty six in all went, including LCDR Knox, whose left eye has been removed the previous day. Owing to a faulty gyro on the Destroyer, she came in too close & had to drop astern to clear herself, causing the jackstay to part; however no one was being passed over. The last patient was not taken and he, with S/Lt Jupp, remains on board for the moment.

We had a day clear from flying, so that the ship could continue it's repairs on the Flight Deck, in the island, and in the Hangar. The island is being repainted hurriedly and all the shrapnel holes are being plugged. Work is in hand to make serviceable again the Flight Deck for take off.

S/Lt Maitland left the ship and went aboard the 'URSA' at an early hour, and from there on to the 'STRIKER', from where he flew off our replacement No. 118. According to his report, he stalled twice in the circuit and the A.S.I. is down for a check.

We are returning to the operational area on Tuesday the 8th inst. It is pointed out in a signal to the ship how essential it is that we keep the forces engaged in Sakishima Gunto, and neutralized as effectively as possible in order to isolate Okinawa from Formosa and China.

Monday  
May 7th

We oiled during the forenoon and afternoon. Destroyers, the 'URSA' and 'NORMAN' called along our Port side to collect baggage, etc. and the Captain himself spent a good deal of time on the Bridge steering the ship.

The Shipwrights were busy fixing the surface of the Flight Deck, and made what appears to be a good job of filling in the hole. Now the main part of the



depression is bevelled off by means of timbers, cut and bevelled, secured to cleats welded to the deck plates, and the whole surface, excepting the centre, being covered by these steel plates, which are both welded to the deck at their edgings and screwed down to the timber.

Maintenance was continued on all a/c, and at the end of the day serviceability was high; a number of engines were run up and wings spread on deck.

Petty Officer Lamb of the A.H.P. was buried at sea at 1515 today and many Officers and Men attended the funeral.

'H'hour was 0545 and we were to have four Corsairs on C.A.P. over the Fleet, while 1842 provided target C.A.P. and bombs. Two planes were available, G & H, and one of them disposed of Avengers with bombs. Owing to the state of the weather (cloud was at times right on the sea, & most of the time was over 7/10. The action commentator informed the ship that over the target it was 10/10, possibly more!), the decision to send Avengers was made and broken at least twice, but finally they did not go.

S/Lt(A) Ferguson took up the first flight comprising besides, S/Lt's Harrison, Blade and Abbott, and they had rather a dirty time trying to patrol in and out of cloud. They were recalled earlier than expected, and came on with '42's bombers. Next went the C.O. with S/Lt's Glading and Blaikie - Asbridge did not get off to complete the flight as two cabs, No.s 120 (violent Mag drop!) & 115 (wing locking trouble) went u/s. This flight also had a rough time and it appeared rather an abortive business, for one concluded that the Japs were held down by weather on their own fields.

However, Lt Gray & S/Lt's Maitland, Reeve & Crosland went up and patrolled for some time. Upon return to the ship at about 1300, with the exception of Maitland, the Pilots did their best to entertain the goofers, S/Lt Reeve introducing his latest special which, strange to relate, landed him on the middle of the deck nicely! S/Lt Crosland appeared a trifle put out by the mechanical deficiency of No. 125.

The new second barrier operated by about 20 men and a length of 6" manila rope appears to be functioning very effectively, though we (and Wings) trust we will not have anyone testing it's retaining power!

At 1400 we began to retire, and the Commander announced that we shall return tomorrow for two more days operations.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS 4th - 6th (Ex Signal)

LOSSES	12 Avengers	<u>Destroyed</u>	18 a/c incl. 3 on ground
	2 Corsairs	<u>Damaged</u>	4 a/c on ground
	1 Seafire	<u>Fired</u>	} About 190 from Battleships } About 970 Rds from Cruisers
	1 Hellcat	<u>Rounds</u>	

All runways on island aerodromes left u/s.

Before the day ended we had one more panic on deck. The light was going when all Pilots were summoned on deck for taxiing the deck park forward. It was raining with tropical violence and a wind of about 35 knots over the deck made it impossible to look forward without wearing goggles. The bases of heavy cumulonimbus clouds were down almost to the water, and visibility was varying rapidly between 50 and 500 yds!

A flight of four Seafires was airborne in this weather and everyone was concerned about their immediate future, since they were getting very short of fuel. Our Flight Deck was therefore being prepared to take them if they found us first. To this end our barriers were being adjusted (good forethought!). The deck park was partly pushed & partly taxied for'd, and we were soon ready to receive. One or two saw the Seafires suddenly appear & then be blotted out again by cloud. So we stood by in vain, but at least we were pleased to learn that the Seafires did land safely on the INDEFAT.

However, during the mêlée, Wings and the Captain observed the absence of jury struts on the wings, and to say that the Skipper was angry is an understatement,

Tuesday  
May 8th

Summary of oper.  
hrs first 3 weeks

16th - 75.25  
 17th - 90.00  
 18th - 79.10  
 19th - 53.40  
 20th - 59.40  
 21st - 26.10  
 22nd - 36.00 off

Sorties 16 - 16  
 17 - 25  
 20 - 24  
 3 - 4  
 4 - 18  
 5 - 10  
 8 - 12  
 109

ICEBERG 8

Tuesday  
(continued)

for he had all Fitters & Riggers mustered on the Flight Deck and tore off large strips.

Wednesday  
May 9th

At 0515 the Fleet was back again in the operational area - about 120 miles from the islands, to continue the attack by sending in Avengers and Corsairs to bomb and patrol.

ICEBERG 8

First flight off from this ship was S/Lt Morten's with Humphries, Brown and Anderson at 0545; the clouds were fairly solid from 8000' down to about 2500' and their patrol was uneventful, apart from the fact that Lt Anderson's belly tank would not work & he was obliged to return before 0900, which was when they were to finish.

S/Lt(A) Ferguson with Harrison, Blade and Abbott relieved the 'Dawn Patrol' who let down from 10,000' and pancaked. His radio(Fergy's) was u/s so Blade took over, though their hop too was fruitless.

1842 took over part of the C.A.P.- they had sent 8 Corsairs to bomb the island airfields earlier in the day - and another flight went to State 11.

Panic stations around 1250 resulted in Morten's flight being hurriedly briefed and stood by for possible immediate fly off, but the emergency faded and the normal patrol took their place at 1330, consisting of Lt Clarke's flight of 1842 with Ewins, Martin & Wakeling. They were flown off at the rush, slightly before their time and the performance of 115 & 128 on take off - Martin & Wakeling - was enough to give anyone twitches, the engines backfired and sounded very rough.

Still Morten's flight did not feel released - Lt Gray seemed to think that it was still State 11. Eventually however, Lt Gray himself flew off with Crosland, Maitland and Asbridge in S/Lt Reeve's place, who had the Duty. At the same time, the C.O. with his regular 2, 3 & 4 - Blaikie, Glading & Hartshorne - went off to 10,000 ft. They were not flying all 1841 cabs, since '42 were just about to bring four back and others were in the Hangar, either u/s or inaccessible.

At the same time - 1545 approx, other Corsairs and Hellcats went up as Fleet C.A.P. together with a flight of four Seafires.

All day the Jap has been lying low, the main activities had been bombing and strafing, by 1842 who found one Judy in a cave which they set on fire, and the gallant work by our friends in 848 - with their few remaining Avengers.

But around 1615 the storm was let loose. We were ranging 8 F4U's for a State 11 provided by '42 Pilots, the a/c were mixed. Unfortunately the kamikazes struck too soon and we were unable to get the a/c off, since the big Red flag was displayed from the Bridge, and that meant 'Everyone on the Flight Deck TAKE COVER!'

Everyone did! The guns opened up on enemy a/c, which were closing rapidly; at one time there were three being engaged. The action commentator gave a pretty good account stating that our guns had shot down one(would-be) suicide, and that another had crashed into the side of the INDOMITABLE. This was later proved incorrect - the VICTORIOUS had been hit but the fire was not serious.

Quite suddenly - with no more than an 'Oh My God!' from the action commentator and a long silence, came our turn. The general opinion was that it was a Betty which came in low from the stern and struck the Flight Deck at a fairly shallow angle, just abaft S3 pom pom and almost in the centre of the deck, in front of the first Corsair on State 11(by this time negat Pilot!). Apparently the plane had been repeatedly hit and was on fire - may not have been carrying bombs.

The Fire Parties worked almost unceasingly on the burning Corsairs - little was found of the Betty - a few bits of Jap -, they had to run once or twice when the Red flag was displayed. An Avenger in C Hangar caught fire and that section was sprayed. The ammunition boxes in the planes on deck went up and .5 calibre was everywhere, the flames and smoke were easily visible from great heights and the boys thought we had more or less had it.

Down in the ante-room and Wardroom were most of the types not flying, clearing space for possible casualties: we were fortunate to have one man only killed - the Captain of S3 pom pom and four injured.

We smoked and conjectured until the Flight Deck was declared clear of fire, and most people went up to help clear away debris.

The two fighter Squadrons suffered equally. Six Corsairs went quickly over the side; we lost 112(Blaikie's), 116(Crosland's) and 122(Harrison's), 848 lost another Avenger.

Below, the Hangar was in a sad state and so were many aircraft, for the salt water spray had done indeterminable damage, and many immediately became 'flying duds'. the number is still to be confirmed. The ratings were swabbing down with fresh water, but this can only postpone corrosion.

Number 1 barrier had been blown away - only the wires this time, the hydraulics were serviceable and, the deck being reasonably clear again, the eight Corsairs were landed on. We learned that the Seafires had been given the interception and we already knew that one enemy was splashed by them. They - the Corsairs - were rather cheesed at not making a contact.

We now have a Flight Deck with a gentle undulating motion going for'd from abaft S3 pom pom, not to mention a square patch which breaks this movement and causes 'premature flight', & Number 2 barrier which is 'getting tired' to quote the Captain's telegram and many Foamites which need replenishing. Our new towing cars have had their time and so have the special elevators. Only Jumbo remains! They may yet find shrapnel in his insides. The island needs painting again though there is little fresh damage. The Radar is beginning to look like a set of rusty pipes!

But! The Captain was pleased with the performance of all ships company and congratulated them later, the UGANDA signalled her sincere admiration.

But - A.O.O.W. comes into force again this evening at 2000!!

Thursday  
May 10th

Early this morning three of our Pilots; S/Lt's Glading, Crosland & Blaikie left the ship by way of the Bosun's Chair, for the URCHIN, and this Destroyer took them with three Pilots of 1842 Squadron to the SPEAKER. They collected six Corsairs and flew them back to the ship, but had to circle for some time before they could land on, since the deck park was aft, being worked upon by crews.

We could see the planes in the air and guessed that they would not be in a particularly serviceable condition, for one of them had been unable to retract his wheels and another had his u/c doors jamming a wheel, indicating the probability of a u/s sequence valve.

Five of these a/c have been allocated to our Squadron KD 177 flown on by S/Lt Glading, JT 650 - an old 7D left behind in Ceylon, flown on by S/Lt Crosland, KD 351 flown on by S/Lt Blaikie, KD 505 flown on by S/Lt Webb of '42, and KD 281 by S/Lt Hodgson of '42. The sixth, JT 687 - the old 7J, fitted with a new engine way back in Gibraltar was given to 1842 - flown on by that ace amongst Pilots, S/Lt J. Wells.

The decision to dispose of six more of our Corsairs which were contaminated by salt water, has been made, and this afternoon, Pilots Anderson, Maitland, Asbridge, Brown, Ferguson and Blade stood by to fly them off as duds to the SPEAKER. The a/c are 115, 117, 118, 125, 126 & 128. At about 1600 five left, Number 126 prove to be u/s on the deck, so that S/Lt Ferguson did not have the enjoyable little trip by Destroyer, as did the other types.

Today was especially selected to be the occasion for celebrating the end of the German War, and the Fleet spliced the mainbrace at 1800 local time. There were many 'neaters', a few with water to help it down, and not many lime juices. The W.O.'s - still using the Wardroom Mess were well to the fore, as some said - 'it took them back' - to what I am not quite sure, but probably to the last festive occasion, since for many it must have been the dozenth time, & I would hate to think it meant they had not touched 'Bubbly' since their rating days.

The Rum was quite sufficient to start the ball rolling and quite soon the whole ante-room was knocking back doubles, with the exception of one or two staid types like Lt Fenwick and Capt. Van Marle who just maintained their usual steady bent.

Friday  
May 11th

We now have 14 aircraft plus one flyable dud. When the work has been done to make the new ones serviceable, we found that their condition generally was fairly good. One of them had a British pattern gunsight, but this was changed by P.O. Ward.

The day was fairly quiet, there was no flying by anyone in the Squadron and no State 11.

The Flight Deck is being patched again, the hole just opposite S3 pom pom is not so bad as the first one, & only one steel plate was found necessary to cover the depression and make the deck serviceable again. Some of the wings were heated up in the fire but they are apparently being considered as still capable of stopping even S/Lt L.M. Reeve.

All day Destroyers were queueing up to hand over spares, more steel plates (-to cover more holes?), Oxygen cylinders, etc. At one time we had two Destroyers along the Starboard side in echelon & there were many types on the Flight Deck admiring the seamanship.

We are returning to Sakishima this evening for another strike of two days - this will be Iceberg 9.

Saturday  
May 12th

By now the form for this operation has become for the Corsairs somewhat stereotyped, and causes little enough excitement in the air; in fact, most of the thrills have been on the deck!

Our first sortie was by S/Lt MacKinnon with Harrison, Ferguson & Asbridge on C.A.P. from 0535 until 0910. At this hour the weather was closed down, and the Flight spent it's time flying between 5 & 8000' trying to keep together. They had no vectors, and were relieved by a flight of 1842.

At 1105 the C.O.'s flight went up with S/Lt Brown as Number 2 in place of Blaikie, due to an a/c going u/s and a misunderstanding as regards changing over. At the same time, Lt Gray's flight went up to do a C.A.P. No one had any luck, in fact the whole day was clear of enemy a/c looking at the Fleet. This may have been due to the decision to move the position of fly off of the Avenger strikes. This time, instead of the Fleet being about 100 miles SSE of the island group, it was about 120 miles to the Southeast. The Avengers had slightly further to go, but they were still within their range. Had it not been for the cancelling of Strike C, there would have been five in all today, but at the moment when this third effort was due to take off, the weather prospects were not good.

S/Lt Morten's flight, with Humphries, Brown & Anderson had good fortune to be escort for the 18 Avengers on Strike Easy; they were in fact the only four Corsairs escorting and split into two sections, weaving over the bombers. The strike was against Hirara airfield on Miyako Island, and some hidden storehouses on one side of the field. Immediately after the bombing, S/Lt Humphries crossed the target area from East to West at about 5500' taking a series of pictures with the only vertical camera we now have.

Subsequently the photographs were produced, they were quite good, since conditions were perfect, only the run was a little too far South and to complete the picture another strip on the North side was required.

After the photographs, the flight strafed a small ship in a cove; it had been pointed out to them by Embassy 301 - LCDR Percy, the strike leader, but upon return there was so much controversy & doubt about it's description that it was only considered a "maybe" - maybe a derelict!

During the day, two Avenger crews were forced to ditch, but before operations for the day were complete they had all been picked up by the Submarine.

Sunday  
May 13th

The Squadron had an easy start today, the first C.A.P. was taken by 1842, and we sent up two flights, the C.O.'s & Morten's at 0825. The C.O. took the 10,000' level and Morten the 5000' - just above thin scattered cloud.

Again the Fleet had moved up North, this time we lay about 120 miles away about E.S.E. from Miyako.

Owing to the fact that Brown flew twice yesterday & Anderson was Duty Officer

Barrie was not included either and the Blade-Abbott team made up the flight. They thought twice that they were going to be lucky, being vectored out to the North to intercept a bogie, but unfortunately each time the enemy a/c was too low to be accurately spotted, and faded from the screen before they could cover the odd 50 miles. However, nothing got through to the Fleet at any time. In fact it was thought at the time that we might have been vectored on to American a/c on a Southerly patrol from Okinawa.

The afternoon's work so far as the Squadron was concerned, consisted of one escort mission with Avenger bombers over the island of Miyako by Lt Gray & S/Lt's Crosland, Maitland and Reeve. They had a fairly uneventful flight and went fairly low. Lt Gray in 121 took photographs vertical & oblique. Landing on was normal - or was it. S/Lt Reeve made two lightning passes at the deck, including one rather spectacular wave off from Starb'd to Port before he accomplished his landing, which was quite good in the final stages. The other flight led by S/Lt MacKinnon, whose eyes are gradually opening, did the C.A.P. At one stage Ferguson and Harrison left him and Asbridge the Number Two to assist two Destroyers who were on A/S Patrol. Owing probably to our Northern position, there was a possibility that Subs would be in the area, and not only was this step taken, but it was also arranged to send up two Avengers from this ship to carry out searches.

S/Lt Vickers and McKee of 848 took off. Shortly afterwards they returned, the Pilot considering that at the rate the cockpit was filling with smoke, he would soon be unable to read his instruments! The other T.B.F. flown by S/Lt McKerrill and faithfully backed by S/Lt Johns cautiously listening to the beacon, completed almost all of the highly involved patrol drawn up by CDR(O). At one time when the armament on board was brought to the ready for the third time, observers on deck saw an Avenger being fired at by the guns of another Carrier. We deigned to open up. Perhaps someone did not switch on I.F.F. S/Lt Johns maintained later that he did, but he didn't know definitely if they were fired at.

Lt Hughes of 848, returning from the strike in one of INDEFAT's Avengers found that he could lower only the Port leg of his u/c, that having done so he could not raise it, and that the emergency lever would not work, being completely rusted up. After circling for some time & failing to change the situation, he landed on the INDOMITABLE safely, fairly well up the deck, and swung to Starb'd only slightly.

There ended the excitement for the day.

By morning we had rejoined the Fleet Train and Destroyers paid their usual visit to collect and deliver material and personnel. We sent on board the BLACK PRINCE (or was it the EURYALUS) about a hundred 500 lb bombs to the INDEFAT since she is running short.

Around 1000, eight fighter boys and two Avenger Pilots as follows:- 1841 S/Lt Morten, Lt's Asbridge & Anderson and S/Lt Ferguson; 1842 S/Lt Howe, Stradwick, Stirling and Martin; 848 Lt Richardson RN and Lt Palmer RNVF, were sent on board H.M.S. QUALITY Destroyer D18 to go to H.M.S. STRIKER and collect eight Corsairs and two Avengers. By means of a 'skeleton chair' and the jackstay, they got inboard the QUALITY satisfactorily; at the same time, the chair was sent back to us with Lt Hughes and crew returning from INDOMITABLE - still annoyed at the shocking condition of the u/c release on INDEFAT's Avengers.

So far so good! However, coming alongside H.M.S. STRIKER the Carrier provided a canvas bucket to contain four men. This rather shook the crew of the QUALITY, but they quickly regained confidence in the safety of their cleat for securing the jackstay, a flimsy bit of work, but a thing which had done them yeoman service and of which they were justly proud. It took Lt Richardson (not more than 6'3" in his socks), Lt Asbridge (not exactly a frail colonial), S/Lt Morten (inclined to obesity) and an unknown Seafire Pilot to tear away this mooring when they were all but inboard, and when two Watches of the hands were hauling away at the other end of the jackstay.

They were in the Oggin quicker than that, with helmets flying, fluorescence dying and Lt Richardson trying to set off dud Verey rockets from the soggy folds

Monday  
May 14th

of a Mae West which would not inflate, not to mention lifebelts, lifelines being showered upon them by crews of both ships, and the Destroyer stopping engines in a seamanlike manner. The ship's boat was lowered and they were dragged back on board the Destroyer, with the First Lieutenant complaining bitterly about the way aircrews of the F.A.A. were pushed around, saying he would not be in it for worlds!!

Eventually they did get on to the STRIKER.

Late in the afternoon the State 11 which had been supplied by Lt Gray's flight - without Lt Gray, was brought to an end, and the deck park moved forward to be struck down, with the exception of the INDEFAT Avengers which were returning home, and our Corsair 126, the flyable dud which S/Lt Brown was flying off for disposal.

This took place at 1730 and the deck was then cleared to receive two Avengers and eight Corsairs. Everyone came on nicely except S/Lt Howe who would persist in executing an approach reputed to have been acquired whilst on the ILLUSTRIOUS. His altitude, all the way round was about 50 ft and he was thrown away with scorn by Bunny Spencer, finally he came round at about 75 ft & was accepted. S/Lt Stirling was a trifle late and came on afterwards himself.

P.O. Guy(R.M.) - our pianist - otherwise 'Boogie' came on board in the evening from one of the Destroyers. We left him behind at Dekheila it will be recalled, after he & the Squadron truck, S/Lt Crosland & his Corsair got rather involved. The Dance Band as well as the Squadron in general will be very glad to have him back again. Destroyers brought mail aboard today-amongst other less important item.

During the morning and early afternoon we were oiled, the Skipper being on the Bridge all the time, chasing everyone around including the Commander, First Lieutenant(Navigator) and the O.O.W.

In the Squadron the a/c were brought up from the Hangar(as many as possible) and the engines were run up.

We now have 18 aircraft, the four flown on yesterday bringing our complement up complete: out of the new ones we had two Corsair II's - JT 459 and 483 and two IV's - KD 291 & 463. They go to S/Lt's (no names shown!) respectively.

During the forenoon the weather was fair; Hellcats provided cover and also exercises for the Gunners in ranging against their dummy attacks.

Later in the afternoon the first anniversary of the present commissioning of the ship was celebrated, though activities have been somewhat curtailed by the rain. However, the ship's Dance Band provided music; in it were S/Lt's Brown and Maitland together with one or two musical types from the Radio and Electrical Sections, and S/Lt Grossam RNVR of ships company, one time an outstanding figure among small ship's was the 'bouncing baby' who cut the cake. The show skimped but this was probably due to it's impromptu setting. The Chief Cook provided a lovely two-tiered cake with crest, it was 'carved' by a sword and taken down to the Mess Decks.

ICEBERG 10

The whole programme for the Squadron today went off according to plan. S/Lt Harrison, duty boy, seems to think he had something to do with it.

Today we provided only C.A.P. - no escort, this was done by 1842 who also bombed the target. In all there were five strikes by Avengers of which we took part - Squadron 848 - in two. Early in the morning another Avenger went in on take off - piloted by S/Lt Morris; all the crew were picked up safely, but the P.O. T.A.G. had a compound fracture of the leg. We learned also that the island aerodromes were again rendered u/s by bombing and that dumps were attacked and barges.

Our programme was as follows:-

0540

C.A.P. C.O. Blaikie Glading Hartshorne

0900

State 11 Provided by S/Lt Morten's flight

\* Corvette  
± Colombo

Tuesday  
May 15th

Wednesday  
May 16th

1055 Lt Gray S/Lt's Crosland Maitland Reeve  
 C.A.P. S/Lt Mackinnon Lt Asbridge S/Lt's Blade Abbott  
 1555 C.O. Blaikie Glading Hartshorne  
 C.A.P. S/Lt's Morten Humphries Brown Lt Anderson

No one was vectored to intercept any enemy a/c though there was a few friendlies which were not identified immediately.

Interest was provided by a slight competition in the rate of landing on, between Lt Gray & S/Lt MacKinnon's flights and the C.O. & S/Lt Morten's flights.

The times for landing on were as follows:-

Lt Gray & S/Lt MacKinnon:- } (no times shown)  
 C.O. & S/Lt Morten :- }

The last planes came on just as it was getting dark!

Later

We learned that at about 1830 a Corsair ditched in the sea, and that the Pilot was picked up by the Submarine.

Thursday  
 May 17th

As was the case in the first day of ICEBERG 10, the Avengers were scheduled to make five strikes against the islands, and that 848 Squadron should participate in Strikes B and D. With the exception of Strike E, which was cancelled, everything went according to plan, and though our C.A.P. was comparatively dull, since there was no confirmed enemy a/c to intercept, the day as a whole was not without excitement, and anyhow almost everyone on board including the Captain does not mind how many 'Kamikazes' do not appear on the screen.

Our flight went off at approximately the same time as yesterday, the first patrol being done by the C.O. with S/Lt's Blaikie, Ferguson and Maitland. This rather mixed crowd was arranged as S/Lt Harrison is u/s with a heavy cold, and S/Lt Reeve is unfortunately incapacitated by the fighter pilot's vocational trouble which comes from sitting for long hours upon a hard parachute. We understand that he will shortly have something done about this.

Lt Gray, S/Lt's Crosland, Blade and Abbott provided the next cover. Their only vector had to be dropped because, in the words of the action commentator "the bogie was almost certainly land".

The two flights returning together clocked a time of 4 minutes 29 seconds for landing on 8 a/c which is very good and seems to indicate that the Squadron is at last getting the word on these intervals.

Meantime, owing to a number of reasons, S/Lt Vickers of 848 had collected a lovely barrier prang. Some say that his hook was not functioning correctly, but he did not stay on the deck very long and was almost entirely airborne when he reached the barrier. This T.B.F. is a write off - depleting 848's already meager supply of a/c. Luckily no one was hurt. The crew was impressed with the interest taken by CDR Steele-Perkins, who being a flying type showed considerable understanding.

During the whole of the day the wind was light & variable and the position of the Carrier was uncertain, but in spite of the fact the gun turrets are now no longer light gray, they can be seen.

Observers from our Flight Deck witnessed at least three barrier prangs on board the VICTORIOUS during the day, one of which by a Corsair was very serious since there were several casualties, some fatal including the Pilot, as the a/c finished up by going over the side and bursting into flames. At this time we received three Corsairs from the VICTORIOUS since she was unable to take any futher after the prang.

S/Lt MacKinnon with Lt Asbridge and S/Lt's Glading and Hartshorne went along to the islands to exercise patrol during part of the afternoon. They had nothing to report from Ishigaki and left the third island, Iriomote, which has had comparatively little attention, being as it is undeveloped. Here they found two heavily camouflaged barges or small ships, and proceeded to strafe them to their

heart's content - five runs each in all. All Pilots reported hits; no opposing fire was observed, though they did see lookouts. A report of this sortie has been drawn up, presumably for A.C.1.

Since Strike Easy was cancelled, the Fleet began to withdraw fairly early, steering an M.L.A. of about 135°. The last C.A.P. of the day was provided by S/Lt Morten's flight with S/Lt Humphries, Brown and Anderson; they were at 10,000 ft and a flight of 1842 were at five. The time passed uneventually, the only diversion being for S/Lt Humphries, whose a/c (No. 140 of 1842) developed a chronic oil leak from the C.S.U. However, after one wave off due to bad visibility & a straight-away, he landed satisfactorily and the day's activities ended.

Friday  
May 18th

Will hereafter  
be known as  
'Black Friday'

It is ironic that after being hit by two Japanese suicide bombers, and getting away with it quite well, that far greater damage should be done to the ship on a non-operational day, and moreover by the direct action of one of our own Armourers.

Bearing in mind the number of times this kind of thing has happened, and the warnings issued by the Captain, that it should occur again so soon after the last effort is simply unbelievable. Yet in spite of the obviously crass carelessness, the enormous value of the aircraft rendered almost certainly unfit for flying, and the damage to the ship's structure, striking power and reputation with the sister Carriers, one cannot help but feel sorry in a way for A.M.(0) Rumbold.

It happened shortly after Stand Easy today, the story is pitifully the same, only this time the Starboard guns of Corsair 121 fired directly into the petrol tank of an Avenger in B Hangar, only sixty odd feet away. Fire broke out immediately and it was of serious proportions. The action taken by the Firefighters was prompt. All Hangars were sprayed with salt water almost immediately. A Hangar contained about 26 500 lb bombs, while unfused still presented a considerable danger. It took a long time to put out the fire: at one time the position was serious and the rest of the Fleet closed in, responding to our signal stating our condition.

Eventually only B Hangar was sprayed, where the Avenger was burning itself out. There was by this time a considerable amount of water in all Hangars and the two lift wells, though the pumps were at work keeping it down. No doubt the scuppers were soon choked by debris and gash.

Fortunately the men working in the overhead stowages, including Parachute Packers & Stores Bashers were able to get away in time without injury; only one man, a Radio Mech Snodgrass at work in the Avenger, was hurt, he received one .5 bullet which passed through the fleshy part of his calf, breaking no bones, pipes or strainers.

Of our 18 Corsairs, only six were undamaged by salt water, being on the Flight Deck: they are Numbers 115, 118, 120, 122, 125 & 128. Squadron 1842 suffered a similar fate being left with six on deck also. The three VICTORIOUS Corsairs escaped through the same reason. 848 have two serviceable Avengers!

Gradually the wrecks were brought up from the Hangars, crews began washing them down with fresh water, but it is not known if one will be saved from becoming just a 'flyable dud'. A few engines were run and proved to be serviceable, but no one is unaware of the insidious nature of corrosion by salt water on unprotected aluminium alloys.

The Squadron stores which were almost immediately overhead are still to be examined though little hope is held out for the bulk: and the ship can muster six serviceable parachutes, all of which are hanging, the rest being soaked in sea water. Such treatment calls for prolonged washing and drop testing. Logbooks and Forms 700 have disappeared together with many other records.

The Avenger, or what was left of it, was thrown overboard late this afternoon in several pieces, and the Hangar is being swept free of water and debris.

As to the future, conjecture is rife; the only certainty is that Rumbold will get cells. We may be able to salvage some from the Hangar for operational service, though action of this nature is probably strictly 'agin the law' & I



don't know if our new A.E.O. - or any A.E.O. would take the responsibility.

A most regrettable incident, and not really the most desirable way to get the ship back to Sydney!

Saturday  
May 19th

During the forenoon the ship was being oiled, and the Squadron worked hard in an effort to 'stop the rot' in the aircraft, so they could at least be flown off. It was remarked that we were going to keep some of the least damaged ones to use on the forthcoming operations. No one was very keen - many of the engines were run up and for the present are considered serviceable.

It has been arranged that the Corsairs in question be flown off to SPEAKER & CHASER this afternoon, and the Pilots are to stand by as from 1400.

Furthermore two flights, one from each Squadron, are to go by Destroyer to the VICTORIOUS to fly for Squadrons 1834 & 1836. Our Squadron will be represented by S/Lt Morten's flight. The suggestion put forward as to why this indisputably hot flight should be sent was denied by the others, but at least there may be something in it.

The weather has closed down rapidly, and it is now raining.

The Destroyer URSA took S/Lt's Morten & Cartledge's flights to the VICTORIOUS but owing to Harry clampers the flyable duds did not take off.

VICTORIOUS was expecting some new Corsairs too but these were unable to go, and eventually the Fleet left it's Train for the operational zone.

Sunday  
May 20th

Owing to our extreme shortage of aircraft, none of our Squadrons were able to take a very active part in the two days operations.

Monday  
May 21st

It is believed that 848 sent off their two Avengers, one to each island, just to drop the odd bomb as a token strike - let's hope they did some damage.

ICEBERG 11

Insofar as the fighters were concerned, '41 & '42 pooled resources and managed to fly C.A.P. sorties, and also maintained some a/c in State 11 on the deck.

The first day Lt Gray was up at 1030 with Crosland, Blade & Abbott. They had a fairly quiet time, especially the S.P. who didn't seem to ever be listening!

At 1530 the C.O. took off with Blaikie, Glading and Hartshorne. Harry had some bad luck, for Number 127 cut badly as soon as he was airborne and was unable to get any higher. With commendable alacrity he pulled up his legs and dropped his tank, but it was no good, 127 could not make it, and very gradually it sank until it had to be ditched. Hartshorne was quickly over the side, the a/c soon sank; but as the ship passed, he was obviously OK and he gave a friendly wave! Quickly our KK Destroyer 'QUALITY' picked him up and very soon no doubt he was none the worse for his experience.

Incidentally, 127 was considered a good a/c, had not been gutted and only shortly before flown by S/Lt Crosland. Water in the petrol was suspected as being the cause of the complete loss of power.

The day's operation had begun about two hours late owing to early morning fog, and so the last strike of the day was cancelled.

On the 21st, the form was much the same, S/Lt Ferguson took up a flight at 0655, including Asbridge, Blade and Abbott. At 1215 the C.O. on State 11 with Blaikie, Maitland and Glading was scrambled to intercept the only enemy a/c plotted, and according to the action commentator, were going out to make the interception. Everyone was hoping that it was his flight which was eventually reported as having shot down a Zeke, but it proved to be Limbo again who brought her Hellcats down and did the job. The C.O. actually saw the Zeke first and tally ho'd but the Hellcats were much nearer, so our Corsairs were just pipped.

On board the VICTORIOUS S/Lt Morten's flight flew together the first day at 1300 doing C.A.P. for the Fleet. They were flying for 1836 Squadron under LCDR Edmundson: he was killed the first day after being shot up while strafing. He was forced to ditch but could not get rid of his belly tank and, stalling in he blew up.

On the 21st they flew at 0940, and were due to be airborne for 3½ hrs. While climbing to 10,000 ft the a/c which S/Lt Humphries was flying decided to cut out at 8000 ft. Returning for an emergency landing the Pilot found the a/c O.K. at lower altitudes but upon climbing again, the same trouble started. It is believed to be due to a magneto which had lost its pressurization. Humphries landed on around 1100, leaving the other three to finish the patrol.

Later in the day he flew Number 2 on S/Lt Hemingway to make a 2 hr C.A.P. and landed on around 1915.

The Captain had informed ships company that we were to return to Sydney shortly. We anticipated that we might stay for ICEBERG 12, even to provide just a few a/c on C.A.P. However it was decided that we should return immediately possibly so that our repairs may be commenced a few days ahead of the others, since the work to be done is probably going to take longer than the others. The Carriers are all going to Sydney eventually, most of them need a fair amount of work doing on them. For the time being however, they are carrying on without us, finishing the ICEBERG series. There is some conjecture as to whether there will be a number 13 as well as 12.

Today we got rid of some stores, accepted mail going back to Sydney, and prepared to leave the Fleet.

The Pilots on board the VICTORIOUS belonging to '41 & '42 were told last night to stand by in the morning to be returned to this ship by Destroyer. Needless to say, none was late and they boarded at 0630. However they did a trip to almost every Carrier in the Fleet Train before coming alongside the FORMIDABLE at about 1015. The UNDAUNTED managed to take away our jackstay pylon before completing delivery of the Pilots gear by dropping badly astern of her station.

S/Lt Hartshorne was also brought back to the ship, looking none the worse.

The Squadron provided a State 11 at 0730 - Maitland, Harrison, Blade & Blaikie - at 1130 - Lt Gray, Ferguson, Maitland & Asbridge and at 1530 - Brown, Anderson, Humphries & Abbott. Owing to the intense heat the Pilots were allowed to come out of the cockpits and stroll around a little.

The Captain has informed various Senior Officers, including C.O.'s that though our Carrier is by far & away above the others in performance, with particular reference to the Air Dept., he is by no means satisfied, especially on the question of discipline. He intends therefore to institute a rigorous training scheme for Petty Officers and ratings of Squadrons, including technical instruction, P.T. & Squad Drill.

Wednesday  
May 23rd

*(no entry shown)*

Thursday  
May 24th

The ship is still on an M.L.A. of about 135° and as we are fairly near to land where the Japs may still have a few a/c, we are continuing the State 12.

At 0745 S/Lt's Brown, Blade & Abbott with Lt Anderson went up as a flight, to carry out C.A.P., camera attacks, and a beat up of the ship and escort Destroyer's KEMPENFELT and WHIRLWIND. They also flew a tiddly formation around the ship for some time, but realized that we were not yet ready to take them on, went away again & came back later.

As promised, the training routine for the Air Branch is in full swing; they are divided into P.O.'s, Leading Hands and ratings below. Owing to the lack of a big deck park, there is always plenty of room for Drill and the Warrant Officers together with the Marine Corporal are having quite a busy time.

One flight at State 12 was provided at 1100 by S/Lt's Ferguson, Harrison, Glading and Crosland. They were allowed to wander around, but remained on the Flight Deck the whole time. At 1500, S/Lt's Morten, Humphries, Maitland & Reeve provided the stand by.

The activity on deck, when the weather is good, is now considerable: apart

from Squad Drill which goes on during all working hours - much to the disgust of our Squadron ratings. We have two pitches for deck hockey, and this game is played non-stop until dusk. Squadrons 1842 have a good team, with Hodson, Stradwick, Moores, etc, and so has the A.H.P. which seems to play at every possible moment. We have S/Lt's Harrison, Maitland, Ferguson, Reeve, MacKinnon & Lt's Anderson & Asbridge(who would probably prefer ice).

A game was arranged between the Officers, and it gave much entertainment to the troops: we had the C.O., Lt Gray, & that bulwark Bastien playing.

Friday  
May 25th

Last night we drew to see who should have the honour of doing the 500th deck landing for the Squadron and S/Lt Reeve was lucky enough to have his name drawn with S/Lt Humphries as the man to do the 499th. A small verse was read by the C.O.; he had composed it especially for the occasion. After dinner everyone adjourned to the 'quiet' room, which is not yet completed, and a spontaneous party began, with Biggie, Pablo, and our new Air E.O. giving turns.

The Commander came in but did not stay long.

At 0515, MacKinnon with Asbridge, Glading & Blaikie provided the State 11, and at 0745 they were due off(only Glading & Blaikie) to do an interception exercise. Immediately after take off S/Lt Blaikie decided that his a/c was decidedly u/s since oil was pouring out at the rate of gallons, so he called up and arranged to make an emergency landing. After some flap involving the clearing of the deck park, he landed on quite safely. It was discovered that the a/c had not been D.I.'d and that rockerbox covers were not tightened up. This caused some panic and the full enquiry is to be held. Actually, Blaikie did not sign the 700, but this is often done when Pilots change a/c at the last moment, when it is excusable. He took off again in another Corsair and proceeded with the exercise.

However this unforeseen development made it necessary for S/Lt Reeve, who was scheduled to fly afternoon to do the first landing, since this would be the 500th.

N.B. Actually we have a few more landings up our sleeve - about 15 to 20, and this means that we have done the 500 without a barrier(which we believe is probably a record of some kind).

As it fell out, no further landing was done today, and had there been one, S/Lt Reeve would not have done it. He attended the briefing to discover that he was officially on the sick list & could not fly. S/Lt Blade was put in his place & Humphries was all set to do the 500th, but the weather came down & further flying was postponed.

Saturday  
May 26th

At about 0630 the ship reached Manus and entered harbour, but before this Lt's Ross and Butterworth were flown off to do ADDL's before coming back to do their first deck landings in about eight months, which they did do quite satisfactorily in the afternoon as we were leaving the islands.

The ship was quickly refuelled, and so were the Destroyers. About 130 bags of mail came aboard much to everyone's delight, and distribution of this was soon underway. The weather was dull and cloudy, but work on the Flight Deck - P.T., training, etc. and painting the island continued.

We had half expected to see S/Lt Wood come on but he did not, and so we assumed that he must by this time be in Sydney.

It is almost certain that the Admiral with his Staff will be coming on board when we leave Sydney after repairs: this is causing much argument and conjecture among the Pilots who may have to give up their cabins. Though sleeping on the Quarterdeck is by means abhorrent, the possibility of sleeping on the conveyor belt and having to stow their gear is not attractive. The question of the right of aircrews to reasonable living and sleeping conditions is giving rise to much discussion.

Sunday  
May 27th

S/Lt's Reeve, Maitland and Humphries took off early this morning to carry out interception exercises, and incidentally S/Lt Reeve was to make the 500th deck landing. The weather was not very good but Pilots mentioned flew on patrol

at Angels 7, 3 & 10 respectively until the A.D.R. called for V.A.B. On being given a correct answer they soon called the a/c down to mattress which was at that moment 1500 ft, and with little further ado, the Pilots were ordered to pancake. Les Reeve made the 500th OK but when Pilots were called to the Bridge, the Captain was annoyed to find that they(the Pilots) had been called down prematurely & insisted that they flew again at 1030. However, at this time Oranges were definitely sour and soon flying was cancelled for the day.

The weather grew progressively worse and in the evening heavy weather lashings were put on all a/c on deck, and ten light lashings on those in the Hangar. The Commander, CDR Flying, the C.O., H.O.O.W, S.D.O.'s and many other Officers examined the state of the Hangar around 2100, so there should be no cause for trouble in the night, though the ship was on quite a good roll.

S/Lt's Brown and Maitland played in the ship's Band, and S/Lt Humphries joined in the quiz - Wardroom Officers vs W.O.'s.

We regret to note that the Squadron A Team was defeated the other evening in the Deck Hockey League by the Torpedo Division. From play to date it seems that 1842 will play the A.H.P. in the final round.

It has been signalled that our Squadron will go to Jervis Bay to work up on the new aircraft. The troops are not very pleased, thinking of sleeping under canvas, and of the distance to Sydney. It is not yet confirmed as to how much leave they will get; owing to the amount of work to be done, it would appear they will not have more than two or three days.

The culmination of the firing of guns in the Hangar is that a Squadron Officer must be present at the testing of all gun firing circuits from now on.

Today we flew six non operational sorties in the morning: take off was at 0745, the weather was not very good, a strong wind was blowing and the sea was getting up. The ship on an M.L.A. of about 160° was making about 22 knots, weaving so that the Destroyer could keep station by steaming directly ahead.

The Pilots, S/Lt MacKinnon in 118, Lt Asbridge - 140, S/Lt Ferguson - 129, Harrison - 122, Brown - 215 and Crosland - 139. The exercises included interception of a 'Gestapo' - actually an Avenger flown by S/Lt Maddox, and a general beat up of the ship and escort by all Pilots. Some of these Kamikaze efforts were very good, though not quite perfect, S/Lt MacKinnon made the most convincing attack from the Port bow. Some acted as fighter interceptors of those attacking, but it was hard to distinguish one from another, and then arguments later as to who was shot down and when, did not help to clear up the matter.

They landed on around 1030, Maddox almost collected another barrier, and MacKinnon grudgingly consenting to cut and line himself up, was at one moment in line for collecting the island, or so it seemed from the Batsman's position. However, there was not such incident.

During the day this particular section of the F.A.A. was subjected to disciplinary training under the eye of the Marine CPL and ships P.O.'s.

The weather has been worse. The wind over the deck which is about Red 40, is up to 45 and 50 knots. Spray is coming over constantly, drenching all a/c which are growing a crust of salt. Soon they will be as bad as those that were sprayed in the Hangar. The waves are up to thirty feet high and double lashings have been put on, as heavy sea lashings, both in the Hangar and on the Flight Deck.

Last night between 2000 & 2100, the Hangar was invaded by Officers to see that everything was correctly secured; Wings, the C.O.'s, the Commander, all S.D.O.'s, the H.O.O.W., the A.O.O.W., the Hangar Marshall; and some other Squadron Hangar Officers. How, after all this examination and supervision, two of our a/c were reported as being incorrectly lashed I do not know! At any rate they were still secure this morning, though on the Flight Deck, covers were almost torn away by the 70 knot wind, and some jury struts were broken.

This morning 1842 were due to fly, and at 1300 S/Lt's Morten, Humphries,

Monday  
May 28th

*Note  
Crosland, that oleo smasher broke  
139 by pulling out the oleo check  
wing.*

Tuesday  
May 29th

Blade and Abbott were going up to do a throw off shoot with the 4.5" guns, that is of course the guns were going to do the offshooting - at least we hoped. However the weather was far from satisfactory, the ship pitching and rolling to a fair degree, and eventually all flying was cancelled for the day.

The whole of the Squadron, with the exception of the Officers, has been mustered for checking gasmasks, anti flak gear, and lifebelts. We found about 17 deficiencies and these men are to be taken in front of the Commander. They will probably have to pay for lost gear, unless they have a sound excuse.

We are now only about 600 miles from Sydney. We were asked by the Destroyers to reduce speed slightly owing to the heavy weather we were encountering.

During our passage from Manus we have met and passed the IMPLACABLE which by this time is now in that part. It is rumoured that the Squadrons are being taken ashore there.

Previously we had seen the Cruiser ACHILLES on the way up to join the Fleet Train.

Wednesday  
May 30th

Early this morning we sighted the East coast of Australia, somewhere near the entrance to Brisbane harbour, we are roughly 350 miles away and expect to reach Port at 0900 tomorrow. Around 0700 a Bristol Beaufighter flew alongside and circled, late in the morning another of these Coastal Command types came to have a shufti. The sea is now quieter though the wind over the deck, still from Port, is up to 50 knots and spray is breaking over our only serviceable a/c, which the Captain stated would have to be cleaned and polished before we reached Sydney.

There was not P.T. this morning but a few of the types were on deck, including Morten, Reeve, Harrison (who couldn't sleep), Anderson, Glading (who is not yet excited it seems) & Humphries who proposes to lead a monastic life in the next week or so. Blaikie was there too, giving his inimitable rendering of 'Round the Bend'.

Thursday  
May 31st

It has been arranged for most of the boys to go on leave immediately the ship docks, whilst S/Lt's MacKinnon and Brown go on to Jervis Bay to get the organization working. The ratings are getting seven days leave in about two or three parties; this should please them very much for they will have a chance at getting away from work completely for the first time since about last September. All Pilots are supposed to be getting 10 days leave, but this is subject to confirmation and we are to visit the ship after 7 days to make a further check. There is a good amount of work to be done to the ship herself, the Flight Deck, island, barriers all have to be fixed, and the overhead stowages and stores put into the Hangar. The Squadrons have to re-equip with new aircraft, which must be all harmonized and swung, painted with their numbers and test flown. Moreover, everyone seems to be leaving & getting a draft chit these days, there will be many new types on board plus the Admiral and Staff when we next leave Sydney, which will be in 3 or 4 weeks time - according to buzz.

Early in the morning we reached Sydney Heads & at nine o'clock the Flight Deck was cleared and station for entering harbour were assumed. The rig of the day was Blues, and they were needed for the day was cold and windy. We berthed at the Woolloomooloo, quite a few types were on the side including some Brass-hats. It was good to see the beer and milk come on smartly and to have lunch with flowers and salads on the table again.

#### NOTES ON THE ACTIVITIES OF SQUADRON PERSONNEL IN AND AROUND SYDNEY ON LEAVE & AT JERVIS BAY

The diarist regrets that owing to the general circumstances of leave, including the dispersal of the Squadron, the difficulty in obtaining information as to the whereabouts and doings of Pilots in particular, no day to day record of events has been kept. However, the following is a general summary of main events, changes, new additions, etc. & a few highlights of the most enjoyable times had by all.

Approximately one half of the Petty Officers and ratings were given leave of seven days, from the 1st to the 8th of June & the other party was sent down to begin work at the N.A.S. Jervis Bay: they were relieved and left J.B. on

the 8th to spend a similar time away from the clutches of the R.P.O. to roam around Sydney and district generally, receiving the hospitality of many local inhabitants. Some went further afield, as far as places like Katoomba in the mountains, and P.O.(RM) Collyer found his way to Tasmania.

L.A.M.(L) Kelly of mortar disposal fame surprised many by getting married, how many of the ratings and Officers will get married, if and when we go back to Sydney remains to be seen, but certainly some very strong attachments were made this time. Steward Shakeshaft may often be seen gazing Southward from the Port Boat Deck; he got engaged to an Australian girl. And P.O. Philbrick is now even keener to end his time in the R.N., his calendar showing the remaining time is up-to-date as ever.

Owing to the arrival on board of the Admiral & Staff, which actually took place officially on June 10th, Sunday, when he met most ship's Officers, the reorganization of Officer's cabins - known as 'General Post' had to be completed before Officers went on leave. At least three lists were produced, showing which types were to have no cabin, and were to sleep on the conveyor, before a satisfactory arrangement was reached. In our Squadron, the question of seniority in age, the time in the ship, and in date of commission was hotly discussed. Such members as S/Lt's Blaikie, Blade, Abbott, Harrison & Ferguson were all under consideration & many protests were made. A lot depended upon S/Lt's Bastien, Wood, Connolly & McLisky, all of whom might be expected to be in the Squadron again.

It finally transpired that all members of 1841 had cabin space except S/Lt Abbott and the new Pilots, none of whom as yet had joined. S/Lt Abbott still haunts cabin 114 where he is tolerated, if only for the melancholy notes from his piccolo, which he plays upon the slightest request.

Almost as soon as the ship got in Lt Ellison was on board: his ankle broken in a fall down the forward lift is almost entirely recovered and he will be with us on the next trip. Lt Barnett from the A.D.R. also came on board having recovered from the severe Jeep accident during the last leave. We expect to see S/Lt's Connolly & Wood, but it is some time before even the former arrived. He had been at one of the fields around Sydney & took a Medical on the 29th June the Board passed him OK for flying and he had two short hops to get acquainted again with a Corsair. Apart from that, he had plenty of time in Sydney and Herne Bay, & from all appearances was finding his way around quite well.

S/Lt Wood appeared on one or two brief occasions to say hello to everyone. He appeared to have completely recovered now, and was going on two weeks leave having just been discharged from Herne Bay. This meant that he would not be coming with us next time since he would have done no flying. Towards the end of our time at Jervis Bay we learned that this was definitely the case, furthermore that he was to go on to a Seafire conversion course.

Everyone agreed that because of his small size this would be a good thing, & though we were sorry to lose another member of the original crowd, we wished him the very best of luck wherever he goes & whatever he does.

Meantime S/Lt Connolly got another four or five days leave before proceeding to Jervis Bay around the 10th of June, where he began to pick up where he left off work in the Squadron.

Apparently it was decided to bring our Squadron strength up to 23 Pilots, and to allow for the departure of some of the originals, four new Pilots duly arrived at Jervis Bay and reported to the C.O. They are:-

S/Lt(A) Jack Harper Bennett of the 55th Pilots Course at ST. VINCENT: he now becomes the senior member in age. He has come right out from U.K. not having been in a Squadron before.

S/Lt(A) P.D.G.(Pretty Damn Good!)Duke, known naturally enough as 'The Duke' also known as possessing an aversion to Batsmen of all kinds! Previously belonging to 723 at Nowra, the Duke is experienced in the dark & mysterious voodoo of Radar Calibration.

S/Lt(A) 'Sam' Lennon a Townie of Barrie Brown, but with practically nothing else in common. Was at Schofield and on the 51st at VINCENT. All that is known of him is the fact that his deck landings are beyond reproach; he was heardchallenging a notorious exponent of the art.

Finally we have S/Lt (?) Inge Storheill our first Norwegian, from Course -3 in the little Norway Naval Air Arm (a scratch man obviously!) and as of April '41, a float plane expert in the Norwegian Coastal Command Squadron 330(N). Coming to us from the great 700 Squadron, he intends to wear RNR rank as Norway is not at War with Japan. He is very keen to fly as much as possible - the man gets paid by the hour!

Changes in the ship Among those departed are the following:-

Commander Flying, Peter Bramwell RN, who despite a tendency to flap on the Flight Deck was a good type: he is now ashore somewhere in Sydney. LCDR Marecco of the Fire Section has also gone, whither I know not.

LCDR 'Pablo' Percy and his Second in Command 'The Auk' have left 848 together with many Pilots and Observers including (Lt's & S/Lt's) Murray (now ~~mosquito sprayer~~), Harry Hawkes, Freddie Studd, Brian, Geoff Rodley, King (Transport Officer in Sydney!), Syd Palmer, Bob Mean, Richardson, Sullivan, Ardmors, Jerry Marvin (mosquito sprayer!), and many others no doubt.

From 1842 went Lt Phil Clarke who preferred to be elsewhere.

Further changes

Commander Elliot will no longer be known as 'Ops' but as 'Commander Air', and will control the whole organization of the Air Dept. Under him will be LCDR Parish R.N. as LCDR 'Ops', he will do the briefing in A.O.R., and LCDR Temple-West familiarly known as 'Twist' and connected or involved in the TIRPITZ attacks last year, will be our LCDR Flying. LCDR Harry Hawkes, once rumoured to be going on draft to U.K., again finds himself with the unenviable job of Chief Flight Deck Officer - a task which he performs with great efficiency. For his Assistant's he still has Lt Bob Joyce & S/Lt Bunny Spencer, with S/Lt Ted Glendenning\* as Number three Batsman. The rest of the Flight Deck Control Team is unchanged; Lt Hamilton R.N.R. will be up to his usual form no doubt. The new C.O. of 848 is LCDR 'Gene' Tierney R.N. and as his Senior Pilot he will have the perennial Subbie - now Lt Peter Smith.

In place of LCDR Marecco we have LCDR May RNVR - supposedly a FIDO expert. He is responsible to CDR Lewen RN, also a star Director. With them still are Lt's O'Rourke & Barrett (back again).

On the Admiral's Staff - officially on board as from 10th June are many Commanders, LCDR's & Junior Officers; among them CDR Lewen, mentioned above, the Fleet F.D.O., Commander Smarten, a Pilot, and another LCDR Savage DSO DSC RN.

At the cocktail party on the 4th June almost all the very senior types came onto the Quarterdeck; the setup was quite as good as the first one held, and most Subbies were able to bring along their guests, some indeed had difficulty in keeping track - having invited more than one. But before we went off into the town, arrangements had been satisfactorily modified.

Romano's & Prince's of course came in for a lot of attention, and some evenings it seemed that the Royal Navy had taken over completely. It would be very hard to choose a Shiek of the Week from FORMIDABLE since the competition was keen, but such types as Maitland, Ferguson, Blaikie and Harrison are not likely to be forgotten quickly. Even when the majority had settled down again in Jervis Bay this quartet used all their wiles to get extra weekends.

SL/t's MacKinnon and Brown had their leave at different times and were not seen about town a great deal.

As usual 129 MacQuarie St - Officer's Club was the best place to stay, though it was difficult to find a permanent bed there - even in the Billiard Room. A few managed hotels, others - flats, and so lived at ease amongst the cosmopolitans.

It is supposed that the Air Branch had a very good time getting a complete break away - ship's Officers got four days and apart from this, had to work during the day and play when they were off Duty at night - which must have been strenuous!

A few types went out into the country, S/Lt's Humphries and Blaikie went off to Katoomba but did not see each other there - small place too! Harrison could often be found in the R.A.C. Club, playing the fruit machines and betting on the horses, drinking beer the while.

The New Zealander's Morten, Glading, Hartshorne, Bastien and others from 1842 spent a day or so in Sydney waiting for transport arrangements to be completed, so they might go home. This was eventually done and off they went to God's own country. McLisky we expected to be in Whangarei of course. Around the 21st they came back, having arrived by ship in company with Dutch Nurses to whom they lost some souvenirs.

Meantime the Flight Deck was being repaired, new girders underneath and old ones strengthened, Hangar stowages being replaced, and the island generally patched up and repainted. Much rewiring was done and the old P.C.O's ready room was converted into an Intelligence Room with maps, folders & aircraft intelligence reports. In the Hangar, trouble was experienced with one of the fire curtains, and it was obvious that this work could not be completed in time, so we had to make-shift with something temporary.

The installation of seven Bofors A.A.guns was a very good sign, and we learned that all the Carriers were having this armament increased. We were still actually under the firepower required.

At Jervis Bay most of the Subbies were billeted at Links, a summer vacation hotel of lathe & plaster, of doubtful repute morally, and damp withall. Almost everyone caught cold - weakened as they were by the extremes of tropical climate and dull wet days in N.S.W. - not to mention Sydney nightlife. The senior types were at Foleys, a superior hotel with better accommodations, better and more plentiful food, and moreover, a bar and good lounge. There were many lunchtime sessions (often the weather was too bad to fly), and in the evenings types went either to Foleys, to the local cinema - tiny but comfortable, or to the Cottage - a place taken over by the Navy and used as a Wardroom, with lots of beer - half pints or schooners. There were a few sessions here too, twice S/Lt Harry Griffin came along from Nowra and played on the piano with Brown & Harrison.

Gradually the new Corsairs came in from as far North as Brisbane, once the weather opened up sufficiently for the R.A.A.F. types to get clear. Some of them were brought in by Subbies, and amongst these was Bob Collyer of 1843 - still working up. Maybe they will relieve us one day! The new cabs are all Blue finished KD - up as high as 889 - which becomes our Number 122 (S/Lt Harrison) and it is fitted with American rocket rails - "zero launches"! They are the newest Corsairs we have yet had and should do some good work - salt water kept away from them.

New Squadron Jobs

Some jobs have since been changed - here they are -

S/Lt Harrison	- Electrical	*of course Brown & Ferguson
Blaikie	- Mess Decks	hang on to their respective
Connolly	- Sports	jobs & so does S/Lt Reeve.
Blade	- Education	
Abbott	- Timekeeper	
Humphries	- Divisional - with Morten's guidance	
Hangar	- Lt Asbridge - also assist Maintenance	
Armament Assist	- Lt Anderson	
Stores	- Crosland	*Maitland still holds the Line Book & has been seen feverishly working on it.

With a slight improvement in weather over J.B. and favourable Met. reports from Laventon, S/Lt Humphries went with the tailwheel for the C.O. arriving around 1300, and stayed with the R.A.A.F. one evening, returning on the 18th. The C.O. & LCDR Parker meantime returned to J.B. on the 17th. S/Lt's Connolly,

Sun - Tues  
7 - 19 June



Duke & Lennon splash fired on the 18th & Lt Asbridge on the 19th.

Wednesday  
June 20th  
Hours flown  
5:45

Pilots Storheill, Reeve, Bennett, Asbridge, Anderson, Crosland and Abbott flew cabs on test today. The weather was not very good but generally seems to be improving all over the area, as though the rainy spell has come to an end. In the evening most of us went back to the ship where, in the large dining hall, a party of 1841 & 2 was held. We had seven barrels of beer, sandwiches & rolls. The whole thing went off well, much de-bagging took place, though '41 was particularly lucky - only MacKinnon suffered. The shambles - for so it developed - ended around 2300 with P.O. *no name* (R.M.) doing voice impersonations of Churchill & Roosevelt.

Thursday  
June 21st  
Hrs for day  
15:35

S/Lt's Maitland, Crosland & MacKinnon flew in the morning - splash firing, aerobatics, etc, and Blaikie, Blade, Reeve & Harrison did A.D.D.L.'s. Meantime S/Lt Humphries was given weekend leave until Sunday so he stuffed off to Sydney, leaving Crosland behind who couldn't be ready for the bus in time. The latter flew up with a T.B.F. however & met Humphries at the Station - much to his surprise. At Nowra Station Morten, Martin, Middleton & other N.Z. types were met, having just returned from leave, & preparing to go on to J.B. to begin flying again. Glading & McLisky were still in town - looking for lost baggage.

At J.B. Duke, Lennon, Ferguson, Asbridge, Bennett, Anderson, MacKinnon and Connolly flew, doing flight drill.

Fri & Sat .  
June 22 -23

S/Lt Reeve accompanied the Squadron personnel from Nowra to Sydney, where they were re-embarked around midday, the ship being still alongside, and as yet with a considerable amount of work to be done on the Flight Deck and in the Hangar. Reeve will stay on board now until the ship puts to sea.

We still have a small party at Jervis Bay & flying continues on a minor scale. During these two days almost everyone flew - all the new types plus Morten, Maitland, Asbridge, Andy, Blade, Abbott & Connolly, and altogether 13:40 hours were put up in local flights, A.D.D.L.'s, test firing of guns and so on. It is noteworthy that Glading & Morten flew for the first time & showed no lack of their old skill and smoothness!!

Sunday  
June 24  
Hours today  
7:00

Today for the first time all the Pilots were present at the field - or at least in Jervis Bay:- even the C.O. returned from Schofield. Morten, Maitland, Crosland, Humphries & Brown arrived back around 1400 & Bob Joyce turned up again with Glendenning to do A.D.D.L.'s with us. Connolly, Bennet, Duke, Storheill, Glading, Asbridge & Ferguson did some dummy landings, and afternoon Brown, McLisky, Crosland & Morten had local hops. McLisky by the way had just put in his first appearance - no change!!

Monday  
June 25th  
Flying times  
2:00

After watching about three details of A.D.D.L.'s by 1842; some of which were rather clueless, we sent up a detail of five, including Blaikie, McLisky, Humphries, Brown & Abbott, who made quite a good pattern and did some good landings. After this we closed down for the day - a few played tennis, the C.O. MacKinnon & others were seen wielding clubs on Foleys lawn. McLisky cleared off smartly to Sydney, ostensibly to locate some of his missing gear.

Tuesday  
June 26th

Since there was nothing to be done today at the strip, most of the types paid a brief visit immediately after breakfast, returning to the vicinity of Links & Foleys to play tennis, practice golf and drink beer. It was a lovely day & everyone enjoyed the rest - or exercise. The programme of flying on was published by the C.O. in the evening. The Squadron being divided into two main flights; both, it was hoped, would be on board by tomorrow evening - failing that, complete embarkation by the 28th!

Wednesday  
June 27th

According to the programme published yesterday, all Pilots were up promptly, even they who were at the Cottage last night; bags were quickly packed and immediately after breakfast transport took the majority to the strip, where we sat around and waited for a signal. The sky was fairly clear and the wind was quite strong from the West. Some trouble was experienced getting rid of wheel chocks and gear but it was settled, and arrangements were made for P.O. Callow & L.A.M. Ward to ride back to the ship in Avengers.

The first party was started up and led by the C.O. it taxied out and took off at 1130. The remainder of us, after helping with directing, etc. went to the strip Wardroom for lunch, after which we returned to the dispersal point for further instructions. It was expected that the C.O.'s crowd would have done their landings by around 1500, when we would fly out. However, shortly after 1300 the whole flight returned; they had not been on the deck, apparently the wind was too high at that time. They had lunch and flew off again at 1430 after refuelling. The flight was - C.O., Blaikie, Glading, MacKinnon, Ferguson, Harrison & Crosland. Later we learned that everything went off satisfactorily.

Meanwhile the rest of us stood by, waiting for a signal to tell us either to go out and land on, or we wait until the next day. Lt Gray decided that we must have the duty boy standing by (or sleeping by) the telephone during the night - once we saw that it was unlikely we would land on today - & Lt Asbridge was 'Joe'.

S/Lt L.M. Reeve had flown the dreaded 120 ashore for swinging & harmonizing and quite a few of 1842 cabs turned up too. S/Lt Humphries & Reeves promised to help them out on swinging, & having settled this question, the remaining Pilots finished for the day.

At Jervis Bay, S/Lt's Reeve & Humphries were shaken early by Lt Asbridge who had spend a cool but uneventful night up on the strip, and they went up to dispersal and began swinging the compasses of 1842 a/c. Luckily the E - W runway was duty and they could use the marked out roses on the North runway. Later some of the '42 types arrived and our pair returned to Foleys for breakfast. Finally all work was finished and we stood by to fly aboard - rendezvous 12:30 as per signal. At the last moment someone had to dash to Links to collect Crosland's dressing gown which he had left behind, and the driver was unlucky enough to run out of gas. Take off was not delayed. The flight out was bumpy but all arrived safely and landed on - Lt Gray, Asbridge & Anderson, S/Lt's Reeve, Maitland, Brown, Blade, Abbott, Morten & Humphries. Peters of '42 floated fast & caught a lovely barrier, writing off one of their new cabs.

On board ship meantime, Connolly, Storheill, Bennett, Lennon, Harrison & Duke did some D.L.T.'s but Conn nicked the first barrier after catching the last wire, which was bad luck. S/Lt Harrison flew 116 ashore to Jervis Bay to collect a new replacement. He will no doubt come up on the INDEFAT which is leaving later than we.

The Captain welcomed back all Pilots, and was soon quickly on the ball, calling for Squadron C.O.'s to inspect a/c just flown on, for general cleanliness. The crews got to work and everything was O.K. by the time Biggy went round.

The ship continues on course in weather that, though not heavy, is causing a considerable swell and the roll we are getting on is at times quite pronounced, though the 'VICTORIOUS' does not seem to be so bad as we are.

The flying programme arranged last night is going to pieces; it had been arranged for Morten's flight with Blade and Abbott as Number 2 section to fly at 1000, but owing to the state of the sea, flying was postponed - including the D.L.T.'s, until 1425. Quite a number of the planes are on deck, and the crews are enjoying climbing all over them: it must be the rolling which gives interest to a job usually disliked. Lt Peter Smith of 848 reports having seen a T.B.F. in the Hangar with one wheel inches off the deck, but he is having difficulty in convincing anybody. Actually it is hard to believe but official reports state that the roll has not yet exceeded 10°.

Around lunchtime the flying programme was cancelled, unfortunately not early enough for S/Lt Morten to have the odd noggin, which he had so dutifully put to one side.

Just before lunch we were addressed by Commander(Air) Elliot who said a few well chosen words on the future duties of Subbies on board during operations. He then called upon LCDR(F) Temple-West to elaborate, referring in particular to Air O.O.W. and Hangar O.O.W., which Wings did quite amusingly, but not sufficiently to keep S/Lt Middleton of 1842 awake. He had only slept 14 hrs last night!

Flying time  
24:10

Thursday  
June 28th

Hours flying  
8:15

Friday  
June 29th

Members of the Squadron were a trifle staggered around dinnertime when they saw tomorrow's flying programme, calling for a fly off at 0600. S/Lt Bob Glading put himself down for a call at 0500 with tears in his eyes.

Saturday  
June 30th

S/Lt Podge Morten's flight met at breakfast around 0430, in company with some of 848's regulars, after which concise briefing was done by LCDR Ops, and the new F.D.O. The whole exercise was to find H.M.A.C. IMPLACABLE and carry out dummy attacks with T.B.F.'s escorted by Corsairs, at the same time providing a C.A.P. of F4U's to fend off the attacks of IMPLAC's Fireflies.

VICTORIOUS and FORMIDABLE each arranged to put up 12 Corsairs, of which 4 were to be C.A.P. and 10 Avengers, 4 for the search and 6 to strike. Everything went off according to plan, we had one '42 Corsair and a T.B.F. which did not fly.

The interception of our attacking force was well done by IMPLAC and our own Corsairs 'splashed' snooping Fireflies. Our 'Snapper' fighter direction worked well though actual communications were not good. A crafty approach by the Fireflies, which included judicious jamming of the V.H.F. frequency allowed them to get past our C.A.P., which had been misdirected.

In the afternoon the 4.5" turret carried out throw off shoots on Corsairs supplied by the VICTORIOUS. By this time we had joined company with H.M.A.C. IMPLACABLE, and were three with about five Destroyers as escort, including QUALITY, QUICK MATCH, KEBRON, (no name shown). The K.G. V, which was sighted by our Corsairs this morning, is due to rendezvous with us this afternoon.

The Hellcats were taken up on the Flight Deck during the First Dog Watch for running up.

During the morning's exercise in which the C.O. & his flight took part, & Lt Gray with Maitland, Reeve & Ingy Storheill. The Squadron clocked 25:00hrs

Owing to the training meeting which did not take place until around 1730, the ranging of tomorrow's fly off went on rather late, and the parties for pushing & securing did not get away until 1930.

Sunday  
July 1st

Tropical rig was piped and almost everyone appeared in khaki, the C.O. at his Requestmen around 0900 was suitable in Whites. The Squadron had no flying in the morning and types busied themselves on other duties. S/Lt's Blade & Connolly(Education), Abbott(Times) Humphries & Morten(Divisional) were fully occupied. Everything seems to be functioning well though a change in Squadron organization in connection with Central Maintenance is rumoured to be forthcoming.

No Make & Mend was given, but one or two types were allowed to go into the Mess Decks to write letters, as they had had no such opportunity recently.

Flying time for  
Sunday  
1235

In the afternoon, S/Lt MacKinnon flew with S/Lt's Lennon, Ferguson & Duke. They carried out attacks on the ships, which fired 4.5" on throw offs. The Captain of Marines was on deck with his little Red flag, but he failed to warn a group of '41 Subbies near Y Turret, & they got a good blast. Some of the firing was quite good: as for the attacks, they were up to standard, but for some of the dive bombing, when the angle of dive couldn't have been more than 20°. During the landing on nothing extraordinary occurred, but Lt Gray was exercised smartly up the deck just before the Green flag was displayed.

At 1700 the C.O. held a Pilots meeting in the quiet room: the new allocation of duties was discussed and the change in the Central Maintenance scheme explained. From these matters the C.O. turned to the new Fleet disposition, in particular the Carrier pattern, and how flying off and on would be affected. It will be interesting to see how the new scheme works when we are joined up by the INDEFATIGABLE.

Monday  
July 2nd

The weather continues to be dull with grey clouds and high humidity. We are now in company with the other two Carriers, one or two Cruisers, & several Destroyers, on a Northerly course. It is said that we will not pass through the Louisiade Group of Islands owing to the number of ships in company, but that we will go around New Britain. The K.G. V has not yet joined our company

but she is not far away & movements seem to be coordinated.

We sent off 8 Pilots at 1000 to carry out combined exercises, which included throw off shoots, calibration. S/Lt Morten in 115 led Bennett, Blade & Abbott, and S/Lt Brown led Connolly, Asbridge & Anderson. The total flying time was 16:15 hrs. There was nothing special to report, except that the initial join up got rather confused.

Tomorrow is to see a balbo with about 120 aircraft airborne and for once ranging began reasonably early, though the rain interfered with the work to some extent. The T.B.F.'s had to be run up, and the Hellcats could not be ranged owing to the amount of work still to be done, so after all, it came to the same thing & the troops worked late. Wings did not find favour when he decided to call out the Duty Watch after rounds to re-arrange the a/c in the centreline & S/Lt Connolly was particularly cheesed.

Owing to the state of the weather - about 1500', 10/10ths gray stratus & low cumulus, flying in the morning was at first postponed, notice of one hour, and then cancelled. Since the deck was fully ranged, P.T. was not held at 0755.

Around 1100 the clouds lifted and four of our Corsairs, S/Lt MacKinnon, Lennon, Glading and McLisky took off and carried out dummy attacks on the KG V and her Cruisers. They were airborne until about 1230. At the same time, four of the Hellcats went off, two had difficulty in locking their wings and had to be struck down: this delayed our take off for some minutes.

A Make & Mend was piped in the afternoon and many of the Pilots were on the Quarterdeck zizzing; for entertainment in the evening, a programme of light music was broadcast, followed by a brainstorming session, during which Lt Peter London RNVR of 1842 gave a modest account of his fascinating power over the feminine sex.

We are in sight of land - probably the Admiralty's. Steaming at the head of the line of Carriers, preceded by the KG V & Cruisers who seem loth to join our company still. We enter harbour around 1100 after we have taken on board one Corsair, one Hellcat and one Avenger. This morning early an Avenger took off for Manus with S/Lt Crosland as passenger; he is to return with the replacement of 116, which was flown to Jervis Bay by S/Lt Harrison who should rejoin us sometime today.

We were very close to land when S/Lt Crosland and two other types, one with a Hellcat, the other with an Avenger, circled the ship and landed on. To our dismay, we found that the 'new' cab was the old 'Java Jive'- 117, which had once been salted and left at Manus. It had been given a 40 hour inspection & generally overhauled, but our A.E.O. decided that it wasn't good enough, and it was finally taken off by lighter, and a better one received in it's place.

S/Lt(A) Harrison came back on board after lunch and recounted his adventure in some detail. There had been no replacement for him to fly back on board, & so he was compelled to stay in Sydney until such time as air passage to Manus could be arranged. He knew that we were due in on the 4th and was anxious not to be adrift. The route in a D.C.3 was by way of Brisbane, Townsville & Milne Bay; flying through the gap was not pleasant, but he got a good rest at the American Base until we arrived.

In harbour, apart from our Fleet, we saw the PIONEER and two Escort Carrier apparently of the SPEAKER - RULER variety. Ship's boats scuttled around their duty runs. Hands were piped to bathe in the Dog Watches.

We lay in our station all day, taking on stores, etc. Squadron work on aircraft continued and in the afternoon the non-Duty Watch was piped ashore; they were lucky, finding good supplies of beer and came back on board quite happy. Meantime a picnic was organized for the Pilots, including a few members from 1842 & 848. Sandwiches, beer and soft drinks were laid on, and a cricket bat, softball and polo ball were taken along. Some difficulty was found in locating the channel to the little island - alongside the boom, but after getting the boat off one coral reef we managed to get inside, close enough to wade ashore. Our star team - McLisky organized cricket and led his side gallantly

Tuesday  
July 3rd.

Wednesday  
July 4th

Thursday  
July 5th

to certain victory. About this time the Captain in his gig with the Admiral passed close by, returning later to swim from the tiny beach, ignoring the baby sharks.

A few threw a ball around in the water and it rained heavily. The main party repaired to a neanderthal bungalow and continued the party while the bar was set up off shore. After an expedition to collect coconuts, we all returned to the boat - which was aground again. It took a considerable amount of concerted effort to get her afloat, but in spite of Bennett this was finally accomplished.

As we got back on board ship - after sunset, the boat was looking reasonably straight again and perhaps the O.O.W. did not see so very much amiss!

Friday  
July 6th

The ship put to sea at about 0900, with the sea very smooth and glassy - practically no wind. We do not yet have any definite gen as to where we are now going, but our course is Northerly. At first it was not arranged to do any flying today, but Air Orders came out later on, and at 1300 S/Lt Ferguson went up with Duke & Lt's Asbridge & Anderson. They carried out F.D.X. with Cruisers, beat up the Battleship - the squadron could just be seen on the horizon, and they came and shot us up too.

Day's flying time  
11:30

Around 1100 it was decided to send up 8 more Corsairs from the Squadron with Major Nelson-Gracie leading in place of the C.O. However, at about 1400 the programme was cancelled, possibly due to weather conditions. When our four landed on finally, around 1615, the only landing to give a slight thrill was Duke's, who tended to pull on the pole slightly.

In the evening we had a quiz contest between 1842 Officers and our own. We were ably represented by the C.O., Connolly, Blaikie, -that well of wisdom L.M. Reeve and S/Lt Blade. Although we lacked knowledge of ecclesiastic character, we were easy winners.

Saturday  
July 7th

Flying began early today, when 2 Hellcats went off at about 0430: we began at 0900, sending off six Pilots MacKinnon, Lennon, Crosland, Bennett, Storheill & Glading to do throw off shoot runs with the Carriers, and the Abbott-Blade combination did a Radar Calibration.

We were impressed with the 4.5" shooting, although sometimes they seem to be rather slow & do not get in many shots. The Bofors are sleeved is proving to be very good indeed, the ship shot away about three quite smartly and the barrage is formidable.

In the afternoon take off the C.O. took up a Corsair with one of the special blaze bombs fitted. He dived to drop it at about 200 feet but the release did not take place until he had pulled hard up to about 800 feet. However the tank burned fiercely on hitting the water, and for a considerable time, the black smoke rising to about two thousand feet, and the area enveloped by flame was probably about 300 yards diameter. It would be rather disappointing for a Pilot to find that he could not release!

Frank Moores of 1842 ditched today taking off Corsair 132 which seemed to suffer loss of power; he went in Port wing first off the Port bow and almost turned over on his back. However he did get out of the cockpit smartly and was seen floating by, close to the sinking a/c, in his Mae West, but without his dinghy. He was picked up by a Destroyer but was not transferred.

Flying time  
17:35

The Squadron Officers played 848 at Deck Hockey and won 5:3. The team included Asbridge & Anderson without our third Canadian star whose place was filled by Connolly, Ingy Storheill, Ferguson and McLisky - madly chopping & mowing, completed the side.

It is getting hotter!

The ships company have been told that we are attacking the Japanese mainland North of Tokyo, in company with part of the American Fleet. There is now some speculation on this topic!

Sunday  
July 8th

At 0900 four Squadron Pilots took off to carry out exercises with the Fleet (by this time we have joined with the KG V & Cruiser escort). The work consisted mainly of psuedo-Kamikaze attacks on the ships. Lt Gray and S/Lt Harrison

took the three Carriers, the KG V and the right forward Destroyers of the screen whilst S/Lt's Maitland and Reeve beat up the Cruisers and the remaining Destroyers. Watching from the Flight Deck it was quite exciting, all the types came as low as they dared and I imagine that now and then the Admiral on the Bridge got twitchy!

The weather closed in just as the boys were landing on, and afterwards it rained heavily. The deck park by the island made it impossible to hold the game of Hockey arranged between the Pilots and ratings. Everyone got a Make & Mend but at 1630 the Duty Watch had to fall in for ranging & spotting.

Monday  
July 9th

Only two Pilots flew this morning, the C.O. & S/Lt Connolly. Another demonstration of the flame bomb was put on by the C.O. of 1842, but again, immediate release was not obtained, and though the fire was most realistic, it was obvious that until the releasing was made positive, then accuracy could not be guaranteed. One of the VIC's aircraft dropped one but this did not even explode - possibly due to the fact that it hung on so long and dropped from a good height.

T.B.F.'s dive bombed the towed target but few of them obtained good results with their smoke bombs.

The most thrilling incidents were caused when Corsairs came in and opened fire with six .50's over the stern of the ship. Almost everyone ducked for safety, they were putting the rounds quite close, attacking from both quarters and once coming down the full length of the deck, just off to Port and firing. Apparently there were VIC's Corsairs too. Other cabs were firing over the bows of the KG V; Cruisers and Destroyers, so everyone had a good time. About every ship did throw off shoots except the Carriers; at one time three Corsairs were working their way around the Fleet being used for this purpose.

At 1415 Major Hesketh gave all Pilots the first of a series of lectures on the coming operations pointing out that he could offer little advice on escape and evasion in Japan proper. He said a few reassuring things about methods of interrogation and gave advice on attitude, security, etc. After the talk he exhibited various toys which might possibly be of some use - concealed compasses, etc., and invited us to help ourselves. S/Lt's Connolly, Humphries, & Co. are now busy breaking in their new pipes & it seems that shortly we will all be turning up in Tokyo peacefully drinking 'MacDonalds Specials' and 'Peterson's Briars'!

The Admiral's quarters are to be used for briefing - NOTICE CAUTIONS WITH CIGARETTES!

Tonight 848 Squadron have a flying programme.

Tuesday  
July 10th

A special hop was scheduled and flown today. Four flight leaders including the C.O., Lt Gray and S/Lt's MacKinnon and Morten flew together as a flight to carry out practice of the general strike layout, the other Carrier's putting up Avengers with ours, and in addition, Fireflies, Spitfires, Hellcats & Corsair

Major Nelson-Gracie flew as group leader with S/Lt Harrison as his Number Two and two of this ship's Hellcats as Three and Four. If Harrison gets lined up for this job, it should prove quite an interesting break for him, working from this unique vantage point.

The C.O. led our four and the rest had the once familiar but now strange jobs of flying Number Two, Three & Four: the rest of the Squadron Pilots were heard to approve strongly of the fact and expect more sympathy in future. Lt Gray has now found another position for the throttle in addition to 'closed' & 'wide open'!

From the deck the whole show looked well laid out, and the landing on procedure went well, apart from Nelson-Gracie's circuit, which was a trifle wide: Lt Bob Joyce was critical at the beginning but S/Lt Harrison managed a crafty 21 second interval. S/Lt Blade took off with a drogue and got away nicely, but on returning, the 90° crosswind made accurate dropping impossible, and we lost it over the Port side.

The a/c took off at 0900 & were airborne for about three hours.

After lunch all Pilots attended a dinghy demonstration on the Flight Deck given by S/Lt L.M. Reeve, who still has hopes of selling one some day. To make proceedings exciting the class moved to the round down to observe the effect of the special double Red distress signals; these went off quite nicely & in spite of LCDR Ops protests, not one abandoned ship.

At 1415 Lt (no name shown) RNVR gave a general talk on Japan, position of chief cities, type of food and industry, and paid particular attention to the effect of bombing of the cities. He maintained that they are designed to minimize the effect of earthquakes! He did not deal with the question of surface blast on blocks semi floating on concrete mats.

When he had finished, the C.O. went on to say a few words about the coming operations, mentioning the first few Ramrods over aerodromes, etc, and stressing the importance of split second timing when strafing. We may go over 8 lines abreast which should be pretty good.

Pro tem, S/Lt's Duke & Bennett will be spare Pilots as they have had little opportunity to work up to any degree, but as things go on, no doubt they will find themselves flying pretty regular.

Sendai seems to be the largest city in the area which will interest us most of all. We have heard the news of the big American raids by Carrier-borne a/c and presume that we will be linking up to this effort.

Again at 0900 S/Lt Blade took the drogue off the deck - this time without a belly tank and also I imagine with injunctions from the Pilots who were to do the air firing to stooge a little less than the 170 knots as per yesterday - it is rumoured that the C.O. had some difficulty catching up.

Owing to lack of coordination - duty boy the Armaments Division was a little rushed, and P.O.(O) Ward was mildly annoyed at being sprung upon unnecessarily at a moments notice. Briefing in the A.O.R. too was confusing and S/Lt's Ferguson, Crosland, Glading & McLisky finally got off around 1030 to do dive bombing, strafing and air firing.

The fact that S/Lt Blade crossed over the ship without the drogue, depriving not only the Pilots of the air firing, but also the Oerlikon and pom pom crews of shooting, seemed too much for everyone to stand.

However, the spectators on deck had a good morning of entertainment with Corsairs dive bombing, strafing - low and high angle - low level bombing, and psuedo-suicides at the KG V. Avengers too provided dive bombing runs - all at the targets towed by the IMPLAC and ourselves. There was a mix-up on our target when it was strafed by the VIC boys who should have been at the IMPLAC target: we were dive bombing just then and things go a little complicated, though no one was dangerous.

S/Lt Blade landed on at 1100 and the rest at 1230. Meantime we had had visitors - one Firefly and a Seafire, also an Avenger with a Captain(E) visiting. Everyone was interested in the exhibits.

We had another and more detailed lecture from Major Hesketh who outlined the area again around Sendai, pointing out the types of fields and inviting us to go along at anytime to learn all about the various places. He was followed by LCDR Britton who made some illuminating statements about the kind of weather we were likely to encounter, with emphasis on the S.E. Trades, early morning fog and different air masses. Refusing to commit himself on the question of volcanoes, he admitted the possibility of typhoons.

No Squadron Pilot flew today and, for that matter, there was comparatively little flying done by the other two. S/Lt Hodgson took off a drogue successfully on his second attempt and the ship shot it away on the second run with short range ammunition.

A State 11 was provided however, in conjunction with 1842, - we commenced at about 0410 with S/Lt's Morten, Humphries, Glading & McLisky, who were relieved at 0615 by '42. At 0400 it is light enough to fly off so we may look

Wednesday  
July 11th

Thursday  
July 12th

forward to long days of flying soon.

The S.M.O. talked to the two fighter Squadrons in the afternoon, going over the contents of the British backpack and special emergency kit, giving useful advice on survival at sea, stressing the importance of carrying as much water as possible.

Now we are about 28° North and this, together with an overcast sky, has given us the first mild day for some time:- the ship should be more comfortable from now on, and beer cool enough to enjoy.

In the ante-room we held a small party in the evening to celebrate S/Lt W.A.M. Ferguson's birthday; he is now 22 and quite a big boy now. The C.O. was present with all flight leaders and most of the other types drank Fergy's health and stayed to drink. The beer lasted until dinner and afterwards musical entertainment was provided by - S/Lt Maitland on his clarinet, S/Lt Brown - Saxophone, S/Lt MacKinnon - Pipe(of Bagpipes family!), S/Lt Abbott - Bud kindly offered to play his piccolo but the offer was ungraciously declined & S/Lt Glendenning of the Flight Deck used it to play Scottish Reels. Wings joined us at the piano in the Wardroom - where the party continued until after midnight.

Friday  
July 13th

S/Lt Blaikie was the only one to fly today - before most Pilots were up, though S/Lt Ferguson & flight took over the early morning State 11. The crews continued working on their a/c - inspired perhaps a little by the Captain's speech to the whole ship last evening. It is now known generally that we are going to Honshu, but specific targets are not yet allocated.

At 1415 LCDR (no name shown) RNVR, our new F.D.O., gave a talk on fighter direction and general tactics. He was followed by Commander (no name shown) RN who said a few words on Kamikazes and the interception of same. Thirdly, LCDR Fields RN talked about radio messages, with particular reference to the shackle code.

By this time it is definitely established that we are to operate as Task Force 37 with American Task Force 38 under Admiral Halsey. At first we will be going to Honshu Island North of Tokyo.

Sat & Sunday  
July 14th & 15th  
& Monday 16th

These two days have been spent quietly enough for the Pilots, though the crews have worked hard enough getting all the aircraft on the top line. Yet within the limits of the work to be done, as much time off has been given, & on Sunday almost everyone had a Make & Mend.

One or two Corsairs have flown towing drogues for gunnery practice by the 4.5" and the Bofors. The shooting seems to have improved considerably.

Pilots have been briefed generally - each afternoon by such leading types as Lt. Colonel Nelson-Gracie, Major Hesketh and Commander Elliot. We now have the general word on Fleet manoeuvres, methods of approach, radio procedures, I.F.F. and the general strategy of the air attacks. The question of aircrew rescue and ditching have been thoroughly discussed.

However, as yet we know nothing definite, either about H hour, where the rescue Subs will be, what the targets will be, etc, and who is to attack which, so there is still a lot of outstanding information.

From Nelson-Gracie we heard a good account of Japanese aircraft - modern types, production and how this has been affected by the Super-Fortress raids. He discussed the performances of the individual a/c with especial reference to the way in which they compared - (in actual tests where possible) with the Corsair, Hellcat and Seafire - the suggested definitive tactics too. On the whole, although the picture was not particularly bright, we feel that we knew where we stand.

By Monday - which was supposed to have been the day we joined the American Fleet and various types were exchanged, presumably to discuss the job in hand. Our Admiral left to go on board the American Flagship.

The Pilots spent the day getting the last details of their gear organized, and in the afternoon the active targets were named and allocated to Squadrons. We, 1841 lost the honour of being first in to 1842 who won the toss; they will



have an early Ramrod, & we will follow a little later with a strike. We will have to provide some C.A.P.

Schooly - LCDR Britton, is still pessimistic about the weather & can provide nothing better than 10/10 over the land, so we will have to wait and see just how the day's operations will be affected.

From the news we learn that the Americans have already been in in force and their measure of success had been great. So far no air opposition has been encountered against the Naval Air Arm - they must be keeping it back! Sendai Marshalling Yards which were to be the subject of one of our strikes do not exist any longer - presumably the work of the Super-Forts.

Tuesday  
July 17th

We had plans for about 42 sorties during the day, including 20 C.A.P. missions, one strike at H+5 12 sorties, and one escort led by Nelson-Gracie with Harrison as Number 2 and two of '42 Pilots as 3 & 4. However, confirming Schoolie's earlier doubts - the weather interfered considerably.

1842 took the first Ramrod at H hour, which was 0350, while we sent up only 4 - as C.A.P. Crosland, Duke, Storheill and Bennett - correction! Duke could not start his engine and did not change over to the spare - so we had only 3 a/c airborne. Take off was 0400 & land on 0705.

Meantime 1842 had been having lots of fun on their Ramrod. Middleton got too low on the water and pranged his prop - managed to get back on board however, Cartledge went in off the bows & close to the ship, cartwheeled about four times and went in. He got out and was picked up. Gunn was apparently shot up about the flaps and ailerons, had about six attempts to get on - failed and was obliged to ditch too. Lt Jimmy Ross of Canada was hit - plane that is, and went into the sea off the coast near the picket's. It is not yet confirmed whether they or the Submarine picked him up. We lost a few of our aircraft - Ross in 123 and Connolly in 128\*, whilst either Cartledge or Gunn was in 112.

\*See later!

Stradwick clipped a barrier with his prop after catching the tenth wire: so we have a few gash bent props in the Hangar by now.

At 0620 Lt Gray of Canada went up with Harrison, Brown and Connolly, and Lachlan MacKinnon with Lennon & Lt Asbridge, also of Canada. Lt Anderson, his cobber, failed to get off. Around 0800 S/Lt Connolly called up and said that he was having engine trouble and asked for an emergency landing. Agreeing to wait for the deck to clear, he flew around the ship accompanied by S/Lt Harrison. Unfortunately the trouble worsened and, since no deck was clear, the outcome was obvious. In a laconic tone Connolly called up - 'Ditching!' and he ditched! The rest of the two flights was back around 0930.

The strike carried out by the Squadron was done in the morning on Niigata, an aerodrome over on the West coast of Honshu. There were two plans. One was to strike (no name shown) and continue on to Niigata, calling again at the first place on the way back: the other to strike (no name shown) and if weather was too much to prevent us continuing across to the West, we were to go Northward to (no name shown) and strike (no name shown) again on our return. In actual fact, the two plans were thrown away, but the general results were quite good.

The C.O. took off with Blaikie, Glading & McLisky, followed by Ferguson with Crosland and Blade -(Abbott was without an a/c) and Morten with Humphries and Maitland (Reeves was unable to start). Before take off there had been a big flap on board - ranging & arming and it seemed that we would be very late. As it was, we were only 10 minutes adrift, but the C.O. and three others did not have bombs. We flew out with the flights re-arranged somewhat - Morten & Humphries flying a separate section. The weather was extremely bad and until we were quite close to the other side, no land was seen - only cloud up to 13,000ft.

The C.O. brought the Squadron out extremely well - about 10 miles North of the target - a stroke of genius so far as most of us were concerned. We went down to the field, picked our targets and, while the C.O. circled, went

in and dropped the eggs - someone had been here before us for there was a column of smoke rising from the field. Ferguson scored a good hit on the Hangars, and Glading had the satisfaction of seeing two aircraft burst into flames as he strafed. Some of the bombs gave a bit of trouble, but were finally got rid of with the exception of McLisky, who could not find the wire to pull! Generally the strafing which followed the bombing was effective, about four a/c burned fiercely and some others were hit.

Turning away, we found a train in the small railway station. S/Lt Blade neatly dropped his remaining bomb here and the others strafed. Two other locomotives were attacked but we were not rewarded with the sight of clouds of steam and smoke. Maybe we lacked the armour piercing ammo. One small Freighter on the coast was strafed by four Pilots before we finally turned for home.

All the way back we saw nothing but cloud( and once four Corsairs at 90° to us & much too close!) until we reached the Picket Cruisers - American - and were passed on back to the ship. Landing on Humphries floated, caught the last wire & nicked the barrier yoke on the Port side. Stradwick of '42 had had a similar experience a little earlier.

Owing to the bad state of the weather, further strikes were cancelled, and we sent up only a C.A.P., led by S/Lt MacKinnon with Lennon, Anderson & Abbott. All day no bogies have been seen in the air or picked up on the screen for interception.

The programme of the whole ship today was to be the same as D.I. except for the fact 1841 was to take the early morning Ramrod at H hour - 0400, and at the same time was to provide four Pilots for C.A.P.

At 0230, four flights were briefed to attack aerodromes North of Tokyo, the C.O.'s, Gray's, MacKinnon's and Ferguson's, whilst Morten's flight was briefed for C.A.P. at 0300. The weather however as usual had the last say - it was coming down in sheets and everything was postponed for about six hours. Types stood by in the ante-room, but almost as soon as we settled down, the A.O.R. rang for the C.A.P. to man their aircraft at 0430. It was still raining & hardly anyone was about, covers were still on and some parachutes were soaking in the inadequate storage place on the island. Finally the four a/c were manned and run up at intervals, though the weather continued to be clamped down hard.

Around 0745 conditions began to improve slowly, we left the mist and rain, and some Blue sky began to show, though landwards it was still thick. At 0930 the Air Control began to visualize the possibility of a strike, and so the C.O. and his flight went back to the Admiral's day cabin to be re-briefed. This time targets North of our original ones were chosen, Koriyama - East & West fields, and Yabuki with alternatives in the shape of coastal targets at Hararo, Tomioka and a radio station.

No sooner had this briefing been done and take off fixed for 1140 than the targets were again changed to fields due East of Tokyo itself on the peninsula formerly the Eastern side of Tokyo-Wan, namely Katori airfield and Choshi, the first reputed to be a medium bomber base and the latter a fighter drome. Because of the short time left, briefing was very sketchy and I imagine the boys left with vague impressions of about six fields in their minds.

Biggy had some trouble in getting on to Katori M.A.D and the flight eventually found themselves going in on a field - later identified as Mobara F.A.D. where there was not much to be seen - a few aircraft dispersed and some fairly accurate light flak. The Squadron bombed and strafed, Jimmy Blaikie was hit in the cockpit, and Lt Bill Asbridge RCNVR was hit apparently in the belly tank and set on fire. He was low at the time - as was everyone else, and went in almost immediately. The a/c burned and exploded on hitting the deck.

The rest called at Choshi but found little or nothing there at all, and at Narato there was not much to be seen.

Landing on was a little exciting when Hammy Gray decided to take a wave

Wednesday  
July 18th

off after getting the cut. He did this nicely over the Port side with about 60° of bank on and got away with it. Blaikie found that his parachute straps had been cut through and that his backpack was punctured in several places - so he now counts himself as lucky.

Bill Asbridge was flying one of '42 cabs - Number 133.

Thursday  
July 19th

After the very early morning, as was expected most of the Pilots spent most of the first day catching up on their sleep, though some were seen wandering around the ship. The duty of Hangar Officer has not yet commenced though it will no doubt as soon as someone discovers there is no duty list.

The sea is rather rough, and a Destroyer which came alongside with S/Lt Connolly decided that it was too rough. The typhoon is around in this area, and various typhoon parties have been held off 'in case'. Nothing is expected. No one flew in the Squadron, though '42 put four Pilots in the air early when the Skipper heard that we had something on the screen. It is reported that London had some difficulty starting. We carried on a State 11 in the forenoon.

Commander(Air) punished L.A.M. Duchett and A.M. Watson for being careless about parachutes on the morning of the 18th - Shave off!

Friday  
July 20th

Very little to report today, nothing happened in the forenoon except it is now noted that the INDEFAT is with us again. We may expect mail to be coming aboard shortly.

S/Lt's Connolly and Cartledge came inboard from Destroyer. Apart from slight abrasions on the forehead, Connolly is O.K. but Chris is badly bruised and shaken up: he stayed on for only a short time and left again to go back to Sydney.

A few types stood by to go and collect five new Corsairs for the Squadron.

S/Lt's Morten, Crosland, Storheill and Maitland went over to H.M.S. 'ARBITER' and collected four Corsairs, KD 538, 695, 658 and 650. So we now have 17 planes in the Squadron and so does 1842, their Pilots also flying on some new numbers.

Saturday  
July 21st

All day the crews worked on the new a/c, painting, cleaning, servicing, etc. and there was no flying

Sunday  
July 22nd

Today S/Lt Brown flew for an hour and a half, drogue towing for A.A. practice.

Before the C.O. and flight landed on(around 1405) LCDR Parker of '42 took two flights against similar targets. As soon as our a/c were on they were refuelled and bombed up ready for another sortie which was to be led by Lt Colonel Nelson-Gracie. We were making up three flights from '42 & '41 and going to the same airfields. Half way through the briefing the flap was cancelled & four were to stand by for C.A.P.

On the Flight Deck the weather had closed in again, fog caused by the N.W. wind coming in over the cold sea and we had a wind of about Force 4, so that we really had to steam to get away from it in order to turn around & land the a/c on. We could see gash Corsairs and Hellcats flying around & finally they all spotted us. We turned into wind & took them on, seven Corsairs and four Hellcats. S/Lt(A) Wally Stradwick, one of the remaining original Pilots, had been shot down over the target in much the same fashion as the previous one.

The Fleet is retiring in a Southerly direction tonight to refuel, etc.

It is now reported that the KG V in company with several U.S. Battleships bombarded the coast of Honshu the night of (no date given) July during which time several hundred 14" & 15" shells were pumped into various installations and defences at a high rate, causing extensive fires.

Monday  
July 23rd

Today we had a few talks by various types, and the general briefing began to take place. The buzz in the ship that we are to attack areas close to Tokyo again seems to be well founded.

7/7/92

NOTE: Letters in script by C. Rolfe

Maydown Cottage  
Aldingbourne  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
England PO20 6VL

Dear Mr. Rolfe:

I am sorry that some time has passed before replying to your letter to Graham (*Mottram of FAA Museum*) of May 28th. I saw him at Yeovilton on June 5th as we held 1841 Sqdn Reunion on 5-6-7 (June) - 8 (people) in all, 5 (from) 1841, 1 (from) 1842 and 2 guests. Inge Storheill, who was Hammy's No. 2 on Aug. 9th 45 sadly died of a sudden heart attack in Spain, aged 71, a fortnight previously, but John Blade was present. He is now the last survivor of Hammy's flight but could not add anything to what he has already said about that tragic day.

A week after the R.V. (*rendezvous*) I had a routine periodic check-up resulting in 2 hospital biopsies on chest and tummy. Chest and lungs okay but lymph gland not. I have had lymphatic leukemia for 3 years so it is something to do with that. I shall be going in for treatment later this week - they reckon they can "fix it" but (I'm) keeping (my) fingers crossed! I was running a temp of around 100° for 2 weeks and felt rotten. But now (I'm) back to normal.

Now about your query concerning Ops on Aug. 9th 45, I suppose somebody somewhere will have the de-briefing reports from (the) Pilot's missions. They may be lodged at the Imperial War Museum. My Sqdn kept a detailed diary of everything which happened, but sadly it only goes up to July 24th 45. The keeper of the diary - S/Lt Alan Maitland RNVR - was shot down over Japan on Aug. 10th so it was never completed. I therefore have to fall back on my memory and the sketchy notes in my own log book for that day combined with the memories of 2 of my Pilots at the R.V. who were usually flying with me - Blaikie and Crosland (S/Lt's RNVR), so here goes!

Between July 17th and 31st we had completed 8 days (of) Ops - then the weather, which had never been very good, became atrocious and there was the threat of a typhoon approaching so the combined U.S. and RN fleets (or Task Forces I should say) had been manoeuvring for 8 days to avoid it, with aircrews always at readiness.

On 7th Aug. we received the news of the Hiroshima atom bomb which explained why when we were in that area in July we were told to avoid it ("Holy City" they said!).

There was much speculation on board as to whether there would be a temporary cessation of hostilities until Jap reactions were known and we expected the Task Forces to remain in a "safe" area until then. No such luck! On Aug. 8th we were ordered to prepare for a further 2 days attacking airfields and shipping in the SENDAI area of Northern Honshu (Island) where we had started in July 17th. Little did we know that a further (atomic) bomb was going to be dropped on Nagasaki on that very day, Aug. 9th.

1841 Sqdn were to start the day with 2 ramrods (Fighter/Bomber sweeps) on Aug. 9th - myself leading 12 Corsairs at 0600 hrs followed by Hammy Gray at 0830 with 8 Corsairs to cover the same targets.

Our Captain, Ruck-Keene, told Sqdn C.O.'s the night before to inform all their Pilots not to take any unnecessary risks as the War was virtually over and he wanted us all back safely. Not so easy if we were to perform the tasks allotted to us!

Anyhow, my 12 duly took off at 6 A.M. My log book says Quote "Straffed airfields at MASUDA, YOKKAICHI, MATSUSHIMA and SHIOGAMA. 9 enemy aircraft destroyed in flames on ground 17 damaged" Unquote. Just looked up the book "A FORMIDABLE COMMISSION" which says that on 9th my ramrod damaged 6 small Merchant Vessels and a warehouse at SHIOGAMA, so we must have gone there first to get rid of our bombs before going to pay a "shattering visit to a number of airfields".

These airfields were spread over a fairly wide area as I recall. We executed only one run on each and blasted a steam engine for good measure. No one was hit although we encountered some small arms flak - usually from behind on our exit route. Apparently the Japs used to call the Corsairs "Whispering Ghosts" as they could not be heard until they were on them. We should have felt more comfortable had we known that! We always made our get-away at tree top level before pulling up to re-form.

Mission completed, I then had to locate the 4 "picket" Destroyers which were placed some 50 miles off shore with their own fighter cover, but not in the direction of the T.F. so that shore radar or any Jap following us would not pick up it's position, which in any case

Bigg-Wither 7/7/92

would have moved some 50 miles since we took off 3 hours earlier.

The picket would then give us a course to steer for "home". Unfortunately, for the first time, I failed to find the picket quickly but only after a search of about half an hour in poor visibility.

I then had just over an hours fuel left at normal cruising speed. I asked each Pilot by R/T to "tell off" his fuel state. Not surprisingly all were less than mine and S/Lt. Anderson RCNVR reported the lowest which I estimated would last him nearly an hour if we flew at our most economical speed which should bring us to the ship in 45 minutes.

I radioed ahead to warn FORMIDABLE to be ready to take us straight on, which they did, Anderson first. But as you probably know his engine cut out 5/10 seconds too early and he hit the Round Down, falling back into the sea and was not recovered.

On landing I had been airborne for 4 hrs 30 min. I should mention here that with the belly droptank we could stay aloft for over 5 hrs but after the tragic death of Bill Ashbridge RCNVR, who was hit by small arms in the tank and blew up next to me on July 23rd, we always jettisoned them partly full before our first attack so that we only used them to get to the target.

Anderson's loss was a heavy blow to me as I felt partly responsible, but then an hour or so later the news came that Hammy was lost. I think Aug. 9th will remain the most miserable day of my life.

In the afternoon of the 9th, an Avenger strike(848 Sqdn) escorted by 1842 Corsairs was sent to Onagawa and I believe 1842 did a ramrod there and to other targets also. If you like I will try to check this.

Well that completes my story, which I hope may be helpful to you - it brings back sad memories.

Yours sincerely

Richard Bigg-Wither

P.S. It has always annoyed me slightly that the markings on Hammy's Corsair in Canada and elsewhere, in Soward's book for instance, are wrong. Many years ago Philip Markham asked me to tell him, which I did:- 1-15. Apparently he also asked the MOD(UK Ministry of Defence) who said that all Corsairs squadrons in the Pacific were marked 1-115. This was quite correct until after the "ICEBERG" Ops in April/May 45 (in the) SAKASHIMA's. Because of the Kamikaze's, followed by a disastrous hangar fire in FORMIDABLE, we completely re-equipped on return to Sydney(Australia). I decided to alter the new aircraft markings, placing the 1 before the roundel to distinguish 1841 from 1842, so in the final Ops on Japan these were the markings.

One of our Army liaison Officers on board was quite an artist and did a water colour of my own a/c showing marking 1-11 which I still have so there is no doubt whatever about it. 1841 markings went from 1-11 to 1-24 followed by 1842's 1-125 to 1-148.

When searching for some photo's for you I came across one of 2 Corsairs from another Pacific Carrier marked P on the tail fin (we were X) I believe that was VICTORIOUS or possibly ILLUSTRIOUS. Which again proves that these split markings were in existence. Anyway, I know I am right.

Maybe this can at last be corrected on the stamp you are proposing to issue.

P.P.S. Again from "FORMIDABLE COMMISSION" about Aug. 9th.

"This second Avenger strike sank 3 Junks, damaged a small Merchant Ship and scored 8 direct hits on a warehouse near the docks." I suppose this was at SENDAI or possibly ONAGAWA. Then, "Our 3rd ramrod'(1842 Sqdn)' arrived over ONAGAWA just in time to join a strike of 80 American aircraft sinking all the shipping that remained in the harbour. They only used half of their bomb load and took the remainder some 60 miles away where they unloaded them amongst small concentrations of aircraft, destroying 17, and damaging 7 with their guns. Meanwhile 2 Corsair Pilots on patrol over the fleet attacked and shot down a Grace(Torpedo/Bomber I think) over one of the American Task Groups."

Again on belly drop tanks - they were in very short supply so we were originally asked to bring them back - exhausted of course as they had a habit of dropping off when the a/c was arrested. We had insufficient(stocks of them) to do what we thought would be a 6 weeks

series over Japan, however after Ashbridge was lost, the Captain agreed that we should drop them, so only the C.A.P. - Combat Air Patrols - over the fleet and pickets only brought them back unless they were engaged in air combat and needed the extra speed.

Hope you can read this latest scrawl - just had my first "treatment" and rather tired after it, but they say that all will be well.

## OPERATIONAL AWARDS 1945

The following memorandum was promulgated by Naval Service Headquarters Ottawa for general information on January 9, 1946.

“The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards:

### THE VICTORIA CROSS (Posthumous)

**Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, D.S.C., R.C.N.V.R.**

“Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, DSC, RCNVR, of Nelson, British Columbia, flew off the aircraft carrier HMS Formidable on August 9th, 1945, to lead an attack on Japanese shipping in Onagawa Wan (Bay) in the Island of Honshu, Mainland of Japan. At Onagawa Bay the fliers found below them a number of Japanese ships and dived into attack. Furious fire was opened on the aircraft from Army batteries on the ground and from five warships in the bay. Lieutenant Gray selected for his target a Japanese destroyer. He swept in, oblivious of the concentrated fire and made straight for his target. His aircraft was hit, and hit again, but he kept on. As he came close to the destroyer his plane caught fire but he pressed on to within fifty feet of the Japanese ship and let go his bombs. He scored at least one direct hit, probably more. The destroyer sank almost immediately. Lieutenant Gray did not return. He had given his life at the very end of his fearless bombing run.

In recommending Lieutenant Gray for the award of a Posthumous Victoria Cross, Vice Admiral Sir Philip Vian declared, “I have in mind firstly his brilliant fighting spirit and inspired leadership, an unforgettable example of selfless and sustained devotion to duty, without regard to safety of life and limb. The award of this highly prized and highly regarded recognition of valour may fittingly be conferred on a native of Canada, which Dominion has played so great a part in the training of our airmen.”

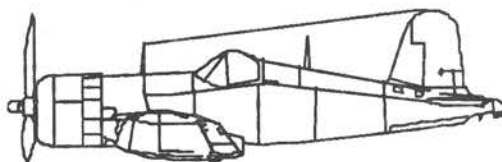
(Publication date - 13 November, 1945)

### THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

**Lieutenant Charles Edgar Butterworth, R.C.N.V.R.**

“For outstanding skill and courage while serving in HMS Formidable in air operations against the Japanese during July and August, 1945.”

(Publication date - 20 November, 1945)



KEITH QUILTER  
 2, Stone Corner Cottages,  
 Stone-cum-Ebony,  
 Tenterden,  
 Kent,  
 TN30 7JD

29th March, 1993

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter dated 23rd March asking if I can help with queries raised by the Canadians concerning the aircraft Hammy Gray was flying on the day he was killed.

If I may take your two queries in reverse order:-

A FAIR FLYING LOG was a log kept by the Squadron Writer (clerk) of all flights made by any of the Squadron's aircraft. I have a photocopy of the 1842 F.F.L. which covers every flight from the first day we started 5th April 1944 up to the day we flew our aircraft ashore to RAAF Maryborough 23rd August 1945.

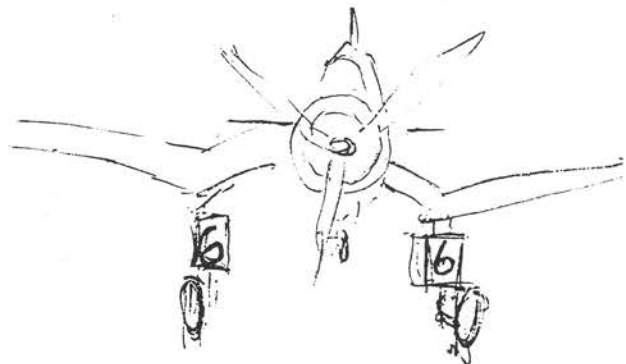
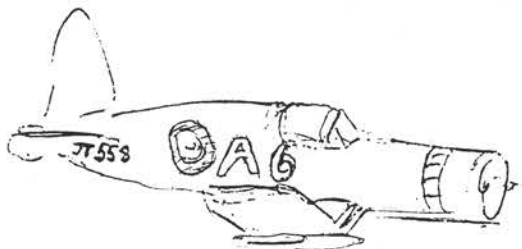
It was obviously the day to day record from which the Squadron made its formal returns of total hours flown both operational and non operational etc. It shows aircraft No., pilot's name, time up, time down, hrs flown, duty (ie purpose of flight) and finally remarks. The latter were very brief - typically D.C.O. for duty carried out, or D.N.C.O duty not carried out. In the operational days D.N.C.O was often but not always elaborated on with such remarks as:

'shot down', 'ditched - pilot OK', 'did not return'

8-4-44

A/C	PILOT	UP	DOWN	IN AIR HRS. MINS.	DUTY	REMARKS
6 558	<sup>S/LT</sup> Quilter	09.40	11.20	1.40	FORMATION	D.C.O.

In the early days of the Squadron we had a Sqdn. Letter and a Sqdn. aircraft No. for identification. In those times the FFL column I might show 6 558, indicating Sqdn a/c 6 followed by the maker's serial number. At that time all our aircraft serial nos. were prefixed JT. Thus the side of the a/c would have in large figures A6, on the dive brakes/oleo leg fairings which faced forward when the a/c was on the ground just the fig 6, and finally on both sides of the rear fuselage under the tailplane the maker's serial no. in small letters - JT558.



Later we changed to a Sqdn. Letter, 1842's was 9, followed by an individual a/c letter, thus large on the sides 9C, just C on the dive brakes and as before the maker's ser. no. under the tailplane. At this time the FFL Col.1 might show - K 587 i.e. a/c 9K ser. no. JT587.

By the time we arrived in the B.P.F., and to fall in line with the U.S.N. system we changed to three figure nos. eg. Hammy's 115. I can't remember the exact range of nos. allocated to 1841 & 1842 Sqdns. but they were roughly 1841 111 - 129 & 1842 130 - 148. We now had an identification letter on the fin to show which Ship we belonged to, all the H.M.S. Formidable aircraft had the letter X on their fins.

From this time on our (1842) Fair Flying Log only quotes the Sqdn. No. in col.1, eg 145 (which was my a/c no.). We used the last two numbers as our call sign. Formy. was 'LUCKY' so my call sign was 'LUCKY 45', and Hammy's would have been 'LUCKY 15'.

During the last month or so of the war and in order to ease the problem of having to range aircraft for many sorties each day, we changed over to a system of central maintenance. Under this system the engineering staff of both 1841 and 1842 squadrons were combined as a central resource to manage all the Corsair aircraft. When a strike was due to be ranged ready for take off, (assuming the need was for two flights of four to go on a 'Ramrod' plus two more flights of four to fly CAP), then the first sixteen Corsairs to become available were ranged on the flight deck and allocated to pilots in their order of takeoff. From that time on we no longer flew what had previously been our own aircraft.

You will now see why I have bored you with this long preamble. In the 1842 Fair Flying Log for 9th August 1945, 115 is shown as being allocated to a S/Lt. Peter of 1842, took off 0525 as Air Grp. Leader's Escort, landed 0855 aboard USS Shangri-La. Left Shangri-La 0925 landed Formidable 1205. 115 flew again in the afternoon this time piloted by another 1842 man S/Lt. Webb as part of a Ramrod of 12 Corsairs. They took off at 1430 and returned at 1825.

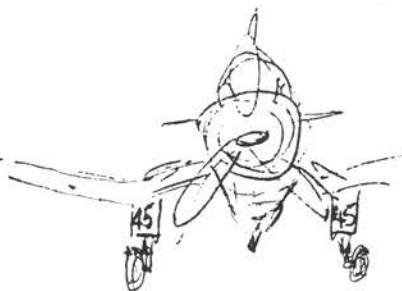
X  
So what I have confirmed is that Hammy certainly could not have flown what had been his own a/c 115 on 9th Aug. But since none of us were any longer flying what had previously been our own a/c, I do suggest that the Canadians should stop worrying over what a/c Hammy actually flew on that fateful day. I still think of my a/c as having been 145, although I was not flying it when I was shot down, (I was in 146), but in the painting I have of my flight on a Ramrod it still shows me in the lead with 145 and I am sure if Hammy had survived he would still think of 115 as having been his Corsair in the Pacific in 1945.

The copy I have of the 1842 Sqdn. FFL I obtained from Charles Butterworth, a Canadian who like me was in 1842 from its forming up to the end of the war. So I am a little surprised that the Canadians are not already aware of the information I have given you.

Hope this may be of some help. The only way to find the aircraft Hammy had allocated to him on 9/8/44 will be to try to trace the 1841 FFL.



*Yours sincerely*  
*Kitt Olt.*





## DEFINITIONS

A.C.1	Admiral Commanding Aircraft Carriers in that Fleet(Admiral Philip Vian)
a/c-cabs-kites	Aircraft
A.D.D.L.'s	Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landings
A.D.R.	Aircraft Direction Room
A.E.O.	Aircraft Engineering Officer
A.G.O.	Air Gunnery Officer
A.H.P.	Aircraft Handling Party(on the Flight Deck)
A.I.R.	Air Intelligence Room
A.L.O.	Army Liaison Officer
A.M.	Air Mechanic
A.O.O.W/A.O.W	Air Officer of the Watch
A.O.R.	Air Operations Room
A.R.D.	Aircraft Repair Depot
Arrester Wire	A series(8 or 10) of wire cables stretched across the aft end of a Flight Deck which when caught by an aircraft's deck hook brings it to a halt
A.S.I.	Air Speed Indicator
A/S Patrol	Anti-submarine Patrol
Balbo	A large number of aircraft flying together
Barrier	Two wire stop barriers which can be raised or lowered located across the Flight Deck(near the island) used to stop aircraft from going forward into parked aircraft if the deck hook does not catch an arrester wire
Bats	The two paddles held by the batsman
Batsman	The Deck Landing Signals Officer who guides an aircraft to land on the Flight Deck - usually an ex Pilot
Beat Up	A practice attack by friendly aircraft - usually at low level
C.A.P.	Combat Air Patrol(usually over the Fleet)
Catapulted/Squirted	Aircraft shot off the Flight Deck using a catapult mechanism
Compass Rose	All the points of the Compass marked on a specific spot on an airfield
Compass Swing	Checking for correct reading of the aircraft compass against the Compass Rose
Corsair	Very unique gull-winged WWII aircraft flown by the FAA under Lend/lease
C.S.U.	Constant Speed Unit(for the engine & propeller control)
Deck Hook(Hook)	A device on or near the tail of an aircraft that is lowered during landing on to catch an arrester wire which stops the aircraft
Deck Park	Where aircraft are parked on the Flight Deck
Defaulters	One of the ships company who is accused of breaking the law
Duty boy(S.D.O.)	Squadron Duty Officer
Ditch	To land on the water
D.I.	Daily Inspection of an aircraft
Divisions	A formal parade of ship's company(best uniforms worn)for Senior Officer Insp.
D.L.T.	Deck Landing Training on the ship
Drafted	A permanent move to another Squadron, ship or place
Drogue	A target towed on a long thin cable by an aircraft which is shot at by other aircraft or the ship's guns
Dumbo	A fixed ship's crane on the aft end of the island
Elevator/Lift	A large platform used to lower(strike down)aircraft to the Hangar Deck or to bring aircraft up to the Flight Deck - one forward and one aft usually
F.A.A.	Fleet Air Arm(of the Royal Navy)
F.A.D.	Fighter Aerodrome(Japanese)
F.D.O.	Fighter Direction Officer(vectors aircraft onto bogies from the A.O.R.)
F.D.X.	Fighter Direction Exercise
Fitter	Aircraft Engine Mechanic
Fleet Train	A number of ships utilized to replenish spares, aircraft, fuel & oil, etc. to a forward Operational Fleet in the Pacific war
F4U/FG-1	Corsair aircraft designation - single engine, single seat fighter aircraft
Gen	Information or knowledge

H.O.O.W. Hangar Officer of the Watch  
 Hands/Ratings Men of the rank of CPO and below  
 Harry Clampers Usually means the weather is bad  
 Harry Dinkers Usually means in a rage or getting mad  
 H.M.A.C. His Majesty's Aircraft Carrier (normally it is HMS)

I.F.F. Radio Beacon emitting a signal to Identify Friend or Foe

Jackstay A line used to transfer men and/or materials between ships sailing alongside  
 Jumbo A large mobile crane on the Flight Deck used to hoist pranged aircraft

KR&AI Kings Regulations & Admiralty Instruction - the Naval Law

Landing on/Pancake Said when an aircraft lands on the Flight Deck  
 L.A.M. Leading Air Mechanic

M.A.D. Medium (bomber) Aerodrome - Japanese  
 Mae West Inflatable Life Jacket used by aircrew  
 Make & Mend A period (half day) of time off to do personal things (write letters, do washing, catch up on sleep) usually the men remain on board

M.C. Motor Cutter  
 Met Office Meteorological Office  
 M.L.A. Mean Line of Advance - said of a ship or Fleet

Nifty Niblick Wields a good golf club  
 No. 11 Punishment (drill, clean up, etc) awarded for breaking the law  
 Neaters Drinking Pusser Navy Rum without any dilution (Coke, water, Lime, etc.)

Oggin In the drink (water)  
 O.O.W. Officer of the Watch

P.B.M. Catalina Flying Boat  
 P.M.O. Principal Medical Officer  
 Prang Crashed or wrecked  
 P.T. Physical Training  
 Put on Charge Charged with breaking the law

R.A.A.F. Royal Australian Air Force  
 Ranging on Deck Put the aircraft in their sequential positions for taking off the Flight Deck  
 Requestmen People who see the Captain for leave, time off, promotion, etc.  
 R.P. Rocket Projectile installed on rocket rails on the aircraft  
 R.P.O. Regulating Petty Officer - the ship's policeman  
 R.T. Radio Telephone

Senior P (ilot) Second in Command of a Naval Air Squadron or XO (Executive Officer)  
 Shipwright A person qualified in the Carpenter Trade  
 Shufti around Having a look around  
 Sight Aligning Aligning the guns with the gunsight  
 S.M.O. Senior Medical Officer  
 S.P. Ship Pickets away from the main Fleet in designated guard positions  
 Splice the Mainbrace Given an extra rum ration usually to celebrate an event  
 Stand Easy A 10 or 15 minute break from work for a coffee, etc.  
 Stooge Around To fly around waiting for something to happen  
 Stoppage of Leave Punishment awarded a defaulter & cannot leave the ship for a specific time  
 Struck Down Aircraft moved from the Flight Deck to the Hangar Deck

T.A.G. Telegraphist Air Gunner  
 Tannoy Ship's public address loudspeaker system  
 T.B.F. Grumman Avenger Torpedo-Bomber-Fighter

u/s Unserviceable (said when an aircraft cannot fly if something is wrong with it)

V.A.B. Visibility Above Base  
 V/S Visual Signalling (by Aldis Lamp, signal flags, etc.)

Watches - Ship's company split into groups to stand watches during the day  
   i.e. Red, White and Blue Watches  
   i.e. 1st Port, 2nd Port, 1st Starboard, 2nd Starboard  
 - the Duty Watch is that group who are on duty at that specific time of day  
 - Times on Watch  
   1600 to 1800 First Dog Watch  
   1800 to 2000 Second Dog Watch  
   2000 to 0000 Evening Watch  
   0000 to 0400 Middle Watch  
   0400 to 0800 Morning Watch

Wardroom A room with a bar for the Officers  
 Wave Off A command by the batsman to the airborne Pilot to not land on  
 Wings Commander Air

## Air Group Commander

Lt. Colonel Peter Nelson-Gracie RM

1841 SQDN

LCDR(A) Richard Bigg-Wither C.O. RN  
 Lt(A) Robert Hampton Gray Sr. P. RCNVR  
 Lt(A) G. Andy Anderson RCNVR  
 Lt(A) W.B. Bill Asbridge RCNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Philip Abbott RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Jeff Bastion RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Jack Harper Bennett  
 S/Lt(A) John Blade RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Jimmy<sup>w</sup>Blaikie RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Barrie Brown RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) J.R. Connolly RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Johnnie Crosland RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) P.D.G.(pretty damn good) Duke RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) W.A.N. Fergy Ferguson RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Bob Glading RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Ronnie Harrison RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Geoff Hartshorn RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Albert Hughes RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Eric Humphries RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Sam Lennon RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Lachlan MacKinnon RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Alan Maitland RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Derek (Podge) Morten RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) D.H. Don McLisky RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Leslie M. Reeve RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Inge Storheill R.Norw.N  
 S/Lt(A) Donald Wood RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) R.W.H. Boynes RNVR

SHIP'S STAFF

CDR Fuller  
 CDR Elliot - Commander Air  
 LCDR Temple-West - Commander Flying  
 LCDR Parish - LCDR Ops  
 LCDR Bruce Hawkes - Chief Flight Deck Offic.  
 Lt McPhee - Flight Deck Officer  
 Lt Hamilton - Flight Deck Officer  
 Lt Bob Joyce - Batsman  
 S/Lt Bunny Spencer - Batsman  
 S/Lt Ted Glendenning - Batsman  
 CDR Lewin - Fleet Fighter Direction Officer  
 LCDR May - FDO(RNVR FIDO expert)  
 Lt O'Rourke - FDO  
 Lt Barnett - FDO  
 LCDR Britton - Schooly  
 Major Hesketh - Intelligence  
 Captain Van Marle - Intelligence  
 LCDR Fields - R.T. Procedure  
 CDR Ralph Swann - FDO

ADMIRAL VIAN's STAFF

Captain Wright - Chief of Staff  
 CDR Lewin - Fleet Fighter Direction Officer  
 CDR Smeeton - Pilot  
 CDR Steele-Perkins - Pilot & Surgeon  
 LCDR Peter Savage - Pilot  
 LCDR Lucas - Pilot(SO Logistics)

1842 SQDN

LCDR(A) A.McD(Judy)Garland C.O. RNVR  
 LCDR(A) Douglas G.Parker C.O. RNVR  
 Lt(A) Eric S. Chipperfield RNVR  
 Lt(A) Phil Clarke  
 Lt(A) E.D. Dunkley RNVR  
 Lt(A) Peter H. London RNVR  
 Lt(A) Jimmy Ross RCNVR  
 S/Lt(A) John Bell RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Charles Butterworth RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Chris Cartledge RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) John Cross  
 S/Lt(A) Dougan  
 S/Lt(A) Alan Ewins RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Ford  
 S/Lt(A) John French RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Gunn  
 S/Lt(A) Snowy Hall  
 S/Lt(A) Harmsworth  
 S/Lt(A) Hodgson  
 S/Lt(A) Dennis Howe  
 S/Lt(A) Longman  
 S/Lt(A) John A( Red) Middleton RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Mitchell  
 S/Lt(A) Frank Moores  
 S/Lt(A) Mortimer  
 S/Lt(A) Newsom  
 S/Lt(A) Payne  
 S/Lt(A) Peake  
 S/Lt(A) Peter  
 S/Lt(A) Keith Quilter RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Ray Railton RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Smith  
 S/Lt(A) R Smith  
 S/Lt(A) Ian( Chiefy) Stirling RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Wally Stradwick RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) B.K. Swart R.Neth.N.  
 S/Lt(A) Harky Thomson  
 S/Lt(A) Eddy Thornberry RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Ron Wakeling  
 S/Lt(A) Webb  
 S/Lt(A) Johnny Wells  
 S/Lt(A) Derek Wheway  
 S/Lt(A) Peter Workman RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Len Martin RNZNVR

1844 SQDN Hellcat Special NF & PRU Group

Lt(A) Dick Mackie OIC Detachment RNZNVR  
 Lt(A) Bill Atkinson RCNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Bill Foster RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Harry Taylor RNVR  
 Lt(A) Jack Ruffin( Photo Recce Leader) RNZNVR  
 S/Lt(A) Dick Goadsby RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) C. Campbell RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) P.S. Chappell RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) F.S. Greenaway RNVR  
 S/Lt(A) R.T. Bell RNVR

FACTS TAKEN FROM 1842 SQUADRON'S FAIR FLYING LOG AND HMS FORMIDABLE SHIP'S LOG

9 August 1945

Times Flown	Aircraft	Task	Pilot	Also
0405 to 0815	# 113	CAP	S/Lt Newsom	131 Ramrod S/Lt Moores
0525 to 0855	# 115	AGL's Escort (landed on SHANGRI-LA)	S/Lt Peter	134 AGL'S Esc S/Lt Mitchell 135 CAP S/Lt Langman
0811 to 1155	# 119	CAP	S/Lt Hodgson	137 CAP S/Lt Payne
	# 120	CAP	S/Lt R. Smith	138 Ramrod LCDR Parker
0925 to 1205	# 115	From Shangri-La	S/Lt Peter	140 CAP S/Lt Gunn
1110 to 1455	# 112	AGL's Escort	S/Lt Ewins	141 CAP S/Lt Workman
1430 to 1825	# 115	Ramrod	S/Lt Webb	142 CAP S/Lt Langman
	# 116	Ramrod	S/Lt Martin	145 Ramrod Lt London
	# 117	Ramrod	S/Lt Workman	145 was also flown by John Bla
	# 118	Ramrod	Lt Butterworth	according to his Logbook
	# 122	Ramrod	S/Lt Middleton	130 was also flown by L Mackin
	# 123	Ramrod	S/Lt Peake	Crosland also flew 132 & 141
	# 124	Ramrod	S/Lt Ewins	

10 August 1945

Aircraft flown that day	#	Task	Pilot	Notes
	# 111	Ramrod	S/Lt Bob Glading	also flew 111 on 10 Aug 45
	# 115	Ramrod	S/Lt Mortimer MacKinnon	also flew 144 & 120
	# 116	Ramrod	S/Lt Peake	
	# 117	Ramrod	S/Lt Ewins	
	# 119	Ramrod	S/Lt Gunn	Crosland also flew 117 on 10 Aug 45
	# 121	CAP	S/Lt Middleton	also by Bob Glading on 10 Aug 45
	# 122	Ramrod	S/Lt Workman	
	# 122	Ramrod	S/Lt Mitchell	(crashed into sea on take off)
	# 123	Ramrod	S/Lt Martin	
	# 124	Ramrod	S/Lt Hodgson	
	# 125	Ramrod	S/Lt Payne	
	# 132	Ramrod	Lt Butterworth	
	# 134	AGL's Escort	S/Lt R. Smith	
	# 135	Ramrod	S/Lt Middleton	
	# 136	CAP	S/Lt Peake	
	# 138	Ramrod	LCDR Parker	
	# 140	Ramrod	S/Lt Webb	
	# 142	CAP	Lt London	
	# 146	CAP	S/Lt Ewins	

Lt Hampton Gray's flight took off from HMS FORMIDABLE at 0826 9th August 1945.

Therefore in analyzing the above information, the last aircraft Hammy flew in would not be any of the following:-

#111, #112, #115, #116, #117, #118, #119, #120, #121, #122, #123, #124, #125, #131  
#132, #134, #135, #136, #137, #138, #140, #141, #142, #145 or #146

This leaves the following aircraft from both 1841 and 1842 Squadrons as a possibility:-

- # 113 - But only had 11 minutes turnaround after landing on at 0815 that morning
- # 114 - Barrier prang on 30 Jul 45 and not shown to have flown since Connolly flew it 9/8/45
- # 126 - Last shown as flying on 5 Aug 45
- # 127 - No record shown anywhere as being on either Squadron (crashed into sea 21 May 45)
- # 128 - Last shown as flying on 4 Aug 45
- # 129 - Last shown as flying on 28 Jul 45 Bob Glading also flew 129 on 9 Aug 45
- # 130 - Last shown as flying on 7 Aug 45 (Lachlan MacKinnon flew 130 on 9 Aug 45 - John Kinro)
- # 133 - Last shown as flying on 25 Jul 45 (earlier aircraft shot down - Bill Asbridge - 18 Jul 45)
- # 139 - Last shown as flying either on 17 or 30 Jul 45
- # 143 - Last shown as flying on 30 Jul 45
- # 144 - Last shown as flying on 28 Jul 45 L. MacKinnon flew 144 on 10 Aug 45

When we locate the 1841 Squadron Fair Flying Log we should be able to clarify the a/c #.

RCNVR LT.(A) ROBERT HAMPTON GRAY VC DSC

- Born in Trail, B.C. on 2 Nov 1917, later moved and was raised in Nelson, B.C.
- Father was John Balfour Gray, Jeweller & Optometrist, died Jan 1949 (Boer War Veteran).
- Mother was Wilhelmina Gray, Legion Silver Cross Mother 1969, died at age 93 in 1980.
- Brother was Flt Sgt Jack Gray, joined RCAF & died on 27 Feb 1942 in a Blenheim crash at Doncaster, England after returning from a mission over Germany.
- Only surviving relatives are his Sister, Phyllis Gautschi & her daughters Anna, Jane & Marcia
- Hampton attended the University of Alberta at Edmonton and University of British Columbia in Vancouver.
- He enlisted in the RCNVR at Calgary, Alberta, on 18 July 1940 and was mobilized as an Ordinary Seaman HO (Hostilities Only) on 3 August 1940 and sent to HMCS STADACONA in Halifax.
- Shipped out with 74 others on SS DUCHESS OF RICHMOND from Montreal, Que. 13 September 1940 for basic training at HMS RALEIGH in England.
- While at HMS DRAKE in Devonport, he volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm and was accepted.
- In January 1941 he was drafted to 23rd "Rodney" Pilots Course at HMS ST. VINCENT in Gosport which he successfully completed in March 1941.
- He then went to RAF Elementary Flying Training School at Luton, Bedfordshire.
- As an Acting Leading Airman he was posted to 31 Service Flying Training School in June 1941 at RAF Station Kingston, Ont. Airport where he trained on Fairey Battles and Harvard aircraft. He graduated and was appointed Sub Lt. on 6 October 1941. Promoted to Lt. 31 December 1942.
- Lt Gray was one of 2629 Fleet Air Arm Pilots to earn their wings through the BCATP (British Commonwealth Air Training Plan) in Canada during WWII.
- Went back to England in November 1941 to HMS HERON at Yeovilton, Somerset for operational training.
- Completed night and Carrier landing training at RNAS CRAIL and ARBROATH.
- In February 1942 was attached to 757 Squadron at HMS KESTREL, Worthy Downs.
- In May 1942 was posted to South Africa and in August 1942 was reassigned to 795 Squadron in Kenya.
- In September 1942 was appointed to 803 Squadron and 877 Squadron in Tanganyika. In December 1942 his Squadron joined the Aircraft Carrier HMS ILLUSTRIOUS for a tour.
- Hampton joined 1841 Squadron (Corsair aircraft) in June 1944 following leave in Canada and was the Squadron Senior Pilot aboard HMS FORMIDABLE - he was later to be recommended for promotion to Lt. Commander. He was mentioned in Despatches for his actions in the attack on the German Battleship TIRPITZ, lying in Alten Fjord, Norway in August 1944.
- HMS FORMIDABLE sailed for the Far East early in 1945, being hit with Kamikaze attacks on 4th & 9th May 1945. Hampton Gray saw much action during this period for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (sank a Destroyer on 28 July 1945) and the Victoria Cross for sinking the Japanese Escort AMAKUSA of 1021 Tonnes in Onagawa Bay on 9 August 1945, just 6 days before the end of the War in the Pacific.
- There were 158 people killed in that action at Onagawa Bay - 157 Japanese and Hampton Gray 71 Japanese Sailors were killed in the Escort AMAKUSA which he sank.
- 9th August 1945 was the day the second Atomic Bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.
- The Governor General, the Earl of Athlone presented Hampton's Victoria Cross to Mr. & Mrs. Gray in February 1946 at Ottawa, Ontario.
- From the Crimean War in 1854 to 1954 there have been 1346 Victoria Crosses awarded, 94 to Canadians, with 16 awarded during WWII.
- Squadrons served on: 757, 795, 803, 877 and 1841.

### RECOGNITION OF Lt. R.H. GRAY VC DSC

1. He was the only Canadian Fighter Pilot to be awarded the Victoria Cross in WWII.
2. He was the last Canadian, and the last Canadian in WWII to be awarded the Victoria Cross
3. He was the only person in the RCN during WWII to be awarded the Victoria Cross.
4. He was the only Canadian Naval Aviator to be awarded the Victoria Cross.
5. In Nelson, B.C. the Post Office and Federal Government complex is called the Gray Building.
6. In Elgin, Scotland, home base of the original Fleet Air Arm, Gray's Walk is named after him.
7. In CFB SHEARWATER, N.S., home of the RCN Air Service, the dependents School is named after Hampton Gray.
8. Lt. Gray's name is installed on the Sailors Memorial in the Point Pleasant Park at Halifax which is a memorial to all Canadian Sailors who lost their lives in WWII.
9. Lt. Gray is the only Allied Serviceman to have a Memorial Monument put up on Japanese soil (in Sakiyama Peace Park overlooking Onagawa Bay - the scene of the action) to honour his courage and gallantry.
10. Twin mountain peaks in Kokanee Provincial Glacier Park are named after Hampton and his brother, Jack Gray. Lake Gray, 103 miles North of Edmonton, Alberta was named as a memorial to Hampton in 1983 also.
11. An Elementary School in Nelson, B.C. is named after him.
12. A bronze memorial plaque for Hampton is installed in the Gyro Park in Nelson, B.C.
13. The Nelson Sea Cadet Corps is named after Lt. Gray.
14. A park pool in Nelson, B.C. is named after Hampton Gray.
15. The University of British Columbia's Gray Memorial Gymnasium is in honour of Hampton.
16. Curlers in the Kootenays play annually for the Hampton Gray Memorial Trophy.
17. A restored WWII Corsair aircraft in Hampton's markings is displayed and flown by the Hamilton Warplane Heritage in their Hamilton, Ontario Museum at the airport there.
18. The Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton, England displays an exhibit of Lt. R.H. Gray and a Corsair aircraft.
19. The Chief & Petty Officers Mess at HMCS CARLETON in Ottawa, Ontario has a display of Lt. R.H. Gray in their Mess.
20. The Canadian War Museum has a memorial place for Lt. Gray VC DSC.
21. A memorial stone and plaque to Hampton Gray and the FAA Aircrew who trained there is erected at the Collins Bay Airfield, or what is now known as the Norman Rogers Airport at Kingston, Ontario, and an exhibit is maintained in the Kingston Flying Club also.
22. The Naval Museum of Alberta in Calgary is dedicated to Robert Hampton Gray VC DSC. A fair-haired, open faced young chap of deceptively quiet ways was the picture wartime RCNVR friends gave of Hammy Gray - he was 27 when he was killed. He was the quiet-looking type, the very picture of fresh, youthful innocence. Actually, he was a ball of fire and a rare hand in a crap game! Gray looked quiet, but he was obviously the Fighter type - aggressive almost to the point of recklessness. He had to be good to be a Fighter Pilot, and he had to be good to do the things he did and live as long as he did. Everyone commented on his engaging personality which made him a welcome addition to any Squadron and to any Ship. Though 5 years of War did not seem to have aged him unduly (deceptively youthful in appearance) he was by that time a seasoned flier. He was not one to brag though, as he was a quiet, sympathetic young man.

Robert Hampton Gray was blond, upright, of medium build with a good physique albeit a bit chubby, who had the bright complexion of a young boy. He was cheerful, relaxed and warm hearted, liked parties but never overindulged the refreshments. He was liked by everybody, but once airborne he turned into a ferocious fighting machine; one cannot always judge people from their appearance!

The following was added in the year 2000 by JR Crosland, using the very limited information available. A more complete picture could be produced if the log books and the memories of the New Zealand members of the squadron could be used.

DIARY OF 1841 SQUADRON

ADD TO ORIGINAL  
(LAST DAYS OF WWII IN JAPAN)

1945  
July 23

24

Flying started early. TOKUSHIMA was the morning target. Nelson-Gracie with Harrison his wingman led strike on TOKUSHIMA. Ferguson's flight in accompaniment strafed and bombed airfield hangars and junks. Meanwhile CAPs over the fleet were being carried out and continued all afternoon, Ferguson's Flight doing one. Duke landed to port and crashed into derrick. Ramrods in afternoon by Avengers and Corsairs, led by AGL, against TAKAMATSU. The CO's Flight was also involved. Harrison hit in hydraulics and undercarriage collapsed on landing. 1842 Squadron lost Schwartz and 848 Squadron lost Francis. There was also an 1841 Ramrod on SUDA in the afternoon.

25

Usual CAPs today by most 1841 flights except Ferguson's - AGL with Harrison had a wasted Ramrod. 10/10ths cloud over target, but C.O's and Ferguson's flights went to Northern HONSHU and attacked factory and ships - 4 hrs 5 mins. Afternoon Ramrod by AGL to TOKUSHIMA. Harrison early return after 1 hour, reason engine problems.

26/27

Refuelling and re victualling as usual, getting well and truly into the swing of things. The hangar and flight deck are a hive of activity preparing and maintaining aircraft for the next phase of attacks.

28

Back to the job! Connolly was in a Ramrod to OO Bay, HONSHU, as was Nelson-Gracie (AGL) with Harrison his usual wingman. Damaged ships and shipyard, CO's and Ferguson's Flights engaged in CAPs in the morning. McKinnon, Gray and Morten's Flights were all busy in Ramrods and CAPs all day. Afternoon Ramrods by CO's and Ferguson's Flights took off into cloud and had great difficulty in rendezvousing. Some made it to 5,000ft and set off for HONSHU. Blaikie hit in hydraulics, rest strafed destroyer. Crosland and Anderson, both having trouble with their aircraft, returned to fleet having failed to join up at 5,000ft. Ship sent them to follow Ramrod, but with u/s radios and engine problems they decided it was wiser to return and fight another day!! Afternoon Ramrod by AGLs and Avengers paid another visit to OO Bay.

30

Good start. Blaikie went straight over the bows on take off! Picked up by "HMS Quality" after going into drink off the port bow and coming up aft the bridge on the starboard side. Long time under water and ship!! The AGL and Harrison did their usual double daily Ramrods. First one had 10/10ths cloud so returned. Still airborne for 3 hrs 10 mins to SUZUKA, HONSHU, second one to harbours on N. coast, ISE WAN HONSHU, 3 hrs 15 mins. Blade and Abbot strafed 3 destroyers. Blade also returned with troublesome oxygen supply and airspeed indicator and touched barrier on landing. 1841 sent Ramrod to MAIUZURA, 4 hrs 20 mins, and a PR sortie to NAGOYA - this was Ferguson and Crosland. They were faced with "Harry Clampers" up to 5,000 ft on hitting coast which washed out any oblique photos so they chose some junks as relief targets in MIKAWA-WAN. They considered attacking an overladen ferry in the very far distance, but after many wise thoughts, didn't!! Bennett crashed into both barriers.

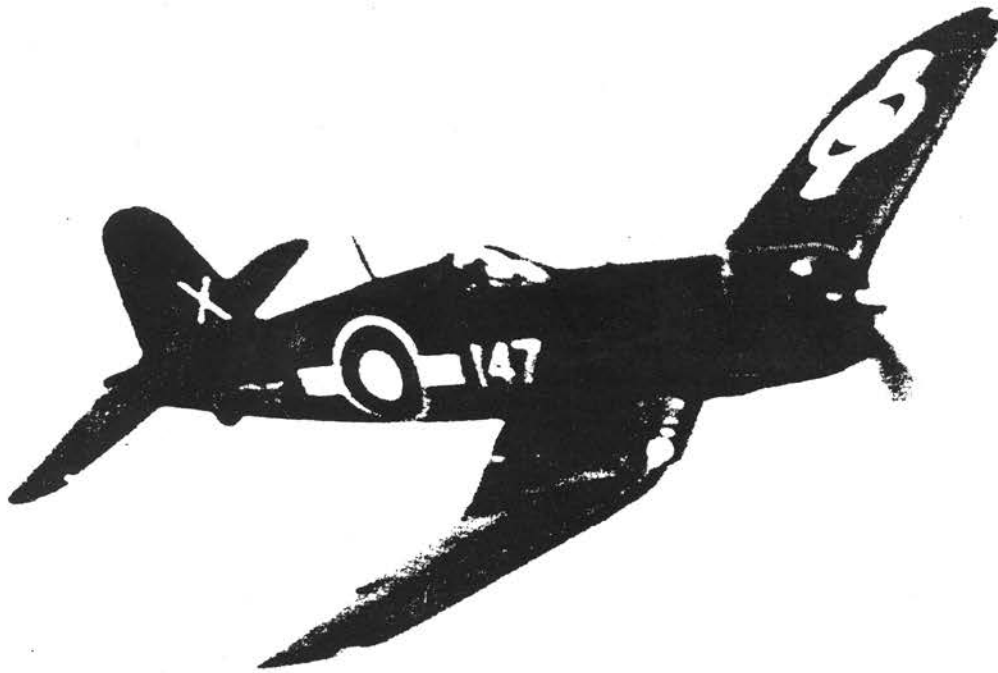
Aug 1

Usual CAPs were flown and the CO shot down an enemy "Nate" with one

- accurate burst seen by numerous witnesses.
- 4 Blaikie did a dive bombing and strike exercise.
- 5 A few days with the Fleet Train to re-victual and rest and repair aircraft. Connolly did a dive-bombing trip (possibly this was against the fleet as no other flights can be traced from the available log books) 2 hrs 30 mins, which was a long time if this was an engine test.
- 6/7/8 Weather was bad over targets, so we were told. Hurricanes also around, so altered course to evade them. Crosland commented on funny and strange pink colour of clouds on 5th August in the morning, not so much as to cause alarm. Pilots enjoying the long rest period but were realising that the end of the war was not far away.
- 9 Back in the groove. Must have heard by then that the atom bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima although we didn't know much about them at the time. The usual monotonous CAPs were carried out. Ramrods in the morning to MATSHIMA. 20 enemy aircraft destroyed, SHIOGAMA harbour, MASUDA, YAMAGATA and SHINNATCHI bombed and strafed, 4 hrs 20 mins. Blade, on returning from Ramrod, crashed on landing when his undercarriage collapsed. Also ALG and Avengers to MATSUSHIMA. Connolly had emergency and re landed but took other aircraft and continued with CAP. He rejoined Ferguson, Crosland and Bennett. This Flight was sent to 25,000 ft. Ferguson's guns would not fire so Crosland's Section went aloft, were vectored onto bogie and eventually were successful in shooting down one "Grace" over US ships at 1,000 ft. Lt "Hammy" Gray and McKinnon's Flights were sent to ANAGAWA to investigate sighting of ships. They attacked and sank destroyer. "Hammy" was hit and crashed in bay. McKinnon regrouped the remaining aircraft and made another two attacks on the enemy, causing more damage. Abbot was hit but managed to make it back. Lt Anderson hit round down on making emergency landing due to shortage of fuel, but was not picked up by HMS "Quality" ( HMS Formidable's position 38 26 N 141 28 E). Morten and Storheil ditched and were picked up by US submarine and US Task Force. Lt Ross of 1842 Squadron also failed to return. What started well ended tragically.
- 10 News received that 2nd atomic bomb was dropped on NAGASAKI on 9th August. Pilots told to calm it and not take unnecessary risks. COs's and Ferguson's Flights Ramrods against KAMAISHI. AGL, Nelson-Gracie with Harrison attacked ISE-WAN and, in afternoon, KORYAMA. Maitland and Reeve made up the AGLs Flight in afternoon to KORYAMA. On the final fling it was decided to strafe. Fatal decision. Alan Maitland was hit and crashed. This was the final sortie of the war by the Formidable aircrews against and over enemy territory. A very sad and tragic end for the Squadron.
- 11 Set sail for Sydney and awaited the final capitulation of the Japanese. Celebrations in the ante-room, but on arising on the 12th we heard no capitulation yet. But we are are nearer to Sydney. Celebrations again!!
- 12 Heavy eyes open to the news of no surrender. Repeat performance of the previous night. Sydney looks nearer. Eventually there was an armistice and so there was an end to our celebrations and we all went our various ways!!

END





# THE SEARCH FOR HAMMY GRAY'S CORSAIR

PHILIP MARKHAM

## PART I - THE AIRCRAFT

In 1966 I had just completed a series of twenty water-colour sketches of RCAF aircraft for the Canadian War Museum and hoped to do a few more. I suggested to Lee Murray, the Curator, that a set of the aircraft of the Canadian air VC's might be of interest. He agreed, but no money was available at the time and nothing has come of it.

However, I started research and soon had details of all the aircraft involved except that flown by Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, DSC, RCNVR. As a matter of interest, details of the six RFC/RAF/RCAF aircraft are as follows:

McLeod	2 Squadron	A-W F.K.8	B5773	Squadron markings
Barker	201 Squadron	Sopwith Snipe 7F-1	E8102	5 narrow white bands fuselage
Bishop	60 Squadron	Nieuport 17C-1	B1556	Blue engine cowling
Hornell	162 Squadron	Consolidated Canso	9754	P
Minarski	419 Squadron	Avro Lancaster X	KB726	VR-A
Bazelgette	635 Squadron	Avro Lancaster III	ND811	F2-T

All I knew about my missing aircraft was:

<sup>Squadron</sup>  
Gray, 1841/6 Naval Fighter Wing, HMS Formidable, Corsair IV FG-1D

There is an excellent little photograph of a Corsair from 1842 Squadron, the sister squadron of 1841 in Formidable, in Profile 47, so I knew that the aircraft would be finished in the U.S. Navy scheme of dark blue overall with British Pacific Fleet markings. This photograph also showed that the carrier identification for Formidable, carried on the fin, was the letter X. It also seemed that the letters of the serial number would be KD, and that the

side number would be between 100 and 150. This 1842 Squadron aircraft, KD244 135/X, was the subject of a 1/72-scale model kit by Frog.

I started my search with a visit to the Historical Branch of the Canadian Armed Forces and to the Canadian War Museum. They expressed interest and wished me luck!

At the beginning of 1967 I wrote to the Imperial War Museum and to the Naval Historical Branch of the British Ministry of Defence. The Imperial War Museum had nothing, but the Naval Historical Branch came up with a serial number—KD587. No side number, however.

Over the next twelve years I found myself involved almost obsessively in writing to anyone who I thought might provide an answer. It was a very entertaining exercise, from which I will report on some of the items of interest.

I wrote to periodicals in Canada, England, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. As far as I know, they all published my request for information. Several people kindly wrote to me as a result, including a cousin (ex-RAF), now a medical officer in the Seychelles, who saw my appeal while looking through a magazine in a dentist's waiting room, while visiting his in-laws in South Africa! There was also an Avenger pilot with 848 Squadron, which was also in Formidable—he wrote from Scotland—and there was Peter Nelson Gracie, who, as a Major, Royal Marines, commanded the Carrier Air Group in Formidable, and had been Gray's OC in 877 Squadron in East Africa. Correspondence with these gentlemen indicated clearly how fallible are our recollections. Photographic evidence clearly contradicts their memories of the colour and markings of their aircraft, as does other documentary evidence. There were several others, too, including the historians David Brown, Ray Sturtivant and Chaz Bowyer. Our exchanges were great fun and filled in a lot of detail, but did not advance me towards the objective. Other 'historians' to whom I have written directly have not been so helpful. They did not even reply.

The Avenger pilot, Peter McClintock, suggested that I should write to Mike Parker, who had commanded 1842 Squadron in Formidable and was then commanding HMS Hermes. Parker passed my request to the Fleet Air Arm PRO who at that time was Commander Keith Dedman. We had a long and interesting correspondence, in the course of which some pictures were obtained confirming that 1841 Corsairs were dark blue overall and that X was the correct letter for Formidable, "notwithstanding what Nelson Gracie thinks"! Keith Dedman also wrote, "We have looked through certain Formidable records and the entry for 9th August shows that 2 Corsairs were lost by 1841 Squadron, one on the roundup (sic) on landing, the other through enemy action. There is no written evidence that the latter was Lieutenant Gray's, though this must almost certainly have been so. However, this aircraft's serial number was KD658 not KD587 as in your letter. If no side number is known, I would suggest 114 as it is believed the Squadron allocation was 110-128. 114 would therefore most probably be the Senior Pilot's aircraft". I wrote immediately to the Naval Historical Branch, MOD, and Captain Macintyre replied, "The figure I gave you cannot be checked as the records concerned have been destroyed during the 'weeding' process necessary to reduce the vast volume of papers required to be housed" at the Records Office! However, it now seemed evident that KD658 must be the correct serial number.

Commander Dedman also put me in touch with Dick Bigg-Wither, who had been Gray's CO in 1841 Squadron, and with the Fleet Air Arm Museum. Bigg-Wither claimed to have a trunk full of 1841 records in his garage. However, in spite of meeting him in London and taking him out to lunch, during which we had an interesting talk, his promise to provide information from the trunk has not been kept, and further enquiries have been unanswered.

The Fleet Air Arm Museum response was somewhat confusing. They replied to me, "We do know that it was one of the three numbers, either 110, 112, or 115, and the general opinion seems to be that it was 115, although there is no definite evidence to support this." How did they know it was 110, 112 or 115? They told Dennis Bradley that, "It is either 140, 141, 147, 148 or 149", (all numbers allocated to 1842 Squadron!) and this resulted in the Heritage Corsair originally being marked KD658 147/X. They also told Ken Molson that it was KD244 135/X, also a 1842 Squadron aircraft, although I believe that this statement was later retracted.

After all this I was getting a bit desperate, and wrote to government departments in Australia and the United States, as well as to some of the British periodicals again, the Fleet Air Arm PRO and the Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association. I also wrote to Goodyear, who built the FG-1D aircraft.

I spent a lot of effort trying to arrive at the side number of KD658 by a process of elimination, and with considerable help from David Brown and Ray Sturtivant. Combat reports were studied, but, although it was an interesting exercise, it proved fruitless. Seldom were serial numbers and side numbers given together, and it was quickly discovered that side numbers of aircraft transferred or written off were applied to replacements. Thus 144 was applied to three different aircraft, one of which was reported to have been JR449, a Typhoon serial! It probably should have been KD449. By this time I myself was inclining strongly to the belief that Gray's aircraft was 115, arguing along the same line as Keith Dedman, but starting at 111, which I knew to have been Bigg-Wither's aircraft, instead of at 110.

Replies from the U.S. and Australia were negative and the FAAPRO had nothing to add. And then, out of the blue came word from Dickie Sweet, which is quoted in full because it is a rare example of the miracle which can sometimes happen when you are just about to give up. He wrote:

"I recently received the Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association Newsletter of August 1975 from Surgeon Captain Frank Preston RN (Retired), who is an associate of mine, bringing to my notice your search for information regarding Lt. R. H. Gray VC, DSC, RCNVR.

"To introduce myself, I was at that time the senior Chief Petty Officer (Air) Telegraphist Air Gunner on the Operations Staff of the Formidable with Commander (Operations) W. Elliott and Lieutenant (Air) A. D. Burger RNVR, and, therefore, closely associated with the pilots, observers and air gunners of the carrier's squadrons.

"I doubt if I can provide you with the precise information you seek; memories get a little dimmed with age, and 30-1/2 years is a long time; nevertheless some items may be of value.

"Included in my duties during operations, was the allocation of aircraft, R/T call signs and relevant communications information appertaining to the particular operation to the pilots and crews.

"Formidable Corsair squadrons, 1841 and 1842, carried out functions such as Fighter protection for the carriers and Avenger Strikes, and Fighter/Bomber operations with code name RAMROD, all in close liaison with the other three carriers in the British Pacific Fleet Task Force TF37 operating with TF38 consisting of three U.S. Navy carriers.

"Although pilots and Avenger crews had, what they considered was their own aircraft, fitters, riggers, etc., the occasions during the Pacific Operations, which were of a very concentrated nature, very frequently prevented this being achieved. The Formidable carried 52 aircraft—26 in the hangar and 26 as a deck park; consequently, this entailed the deck park being moved from the stern of the Flight Deck to forward of the barriers, down into the hangar, run aft, and then up the rear lift, etc. etc. to enable aircraft to be ranged ready for take-off in the correct order.

"Hammy Gray's aircraft was 119 of 1841 squadron, and at the very start of the start of the Pacific Operations, he asked me to keep him and aircraft together as far as was possible. Remembering my own sentiments when I flew in Swordfish and Albacores of 819 and 827 squadrons in the Illustrious, Victorious and Indomitable, this I endeavoured to do, and, remarkably enough, this I was able to achieve right through the operations of March, April, May, June, July and August up to the last day, August 9th, usually legitimately, now and then by fiddling the flight formation.

"On August 8th however, two odd things occurred as follows:

- 1) 119 was trapped in the hangar by two unserviceable aircraft damaged by flak the day before, and which could not be moved in the time available to range the first RAMROD of the day, and the only aircraft I could allocate Hammy, to enable him to lead his flight, was 115. Naturally he was disappointed about this when he reported for his briefing, but nothing could be done about it.
- 2) After the pilots received their briefing, which was on airfields in conjunction with an Avenger Strike, they manned aircraft and started engines on the Commander (Flying) signal, and whilst the Formidable awaited the Task Force signal to turn into wind, we in Operations received information from the morning RECCE aircraft, information that a small convoy including a destroyer had been sighted in Onagawa Wan area. R/T silence was in force and so Commander (O) ordered me to convey the new Primary Target orders to Hammy by word of mouth. This entailed threading my way through the closely parked aircraft to Hammy, who was in the second flight for take-off, something I didn't relish at the time, what with propeller wash and whirling propellers. However, I reached him safely, gave him his new orders, which he acknowledged and finished by saying, "See you later Chief". So in effect I was the last person to speak to him physically.

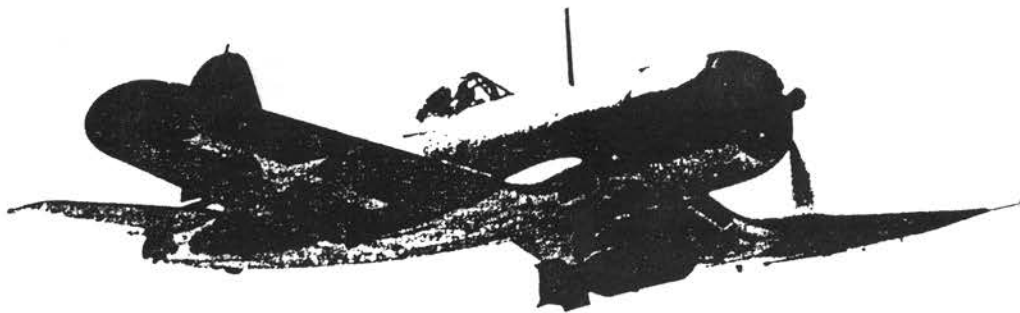
"I regret I cannot help you with regard to the serial numbers of 119 and 115. These were of no importance to us in Ops, only the Sdn numbers, but I can confirm 147 was an aircraft of 1842 squadron.

"When the news filtered back that Hammy had "bitten it", CDR (O) and I were naturally very upset (Lt. Burger had been killed in the first Kamikaze attack), especially as we carried out only three more RAMRODS before we ceased operations on the afternoon of August 10th."

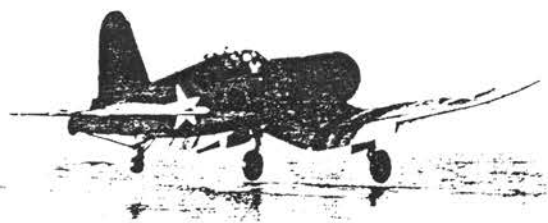
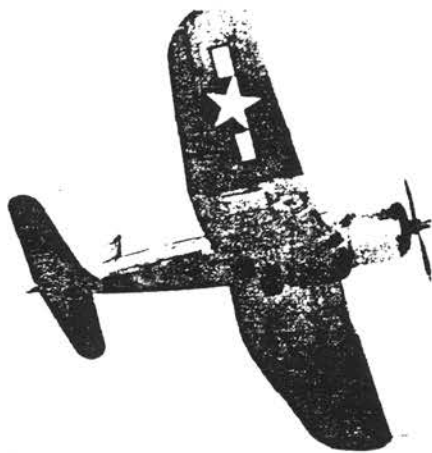
The authenticity of this letter seems undeniable, the incidents described being so clearly of the kind which would stay in one's mind. So there it was—KD658 115/X. We had guessed the right number after all, but for quite the wrong reasons!

I contacted John Griffin immediately, and he, too, was convinced that Sweet's recollections were accurate. It was a pleasure to me when he advised Dennis Bradley, who had the side number of the Heritage Corsair changed immediately.

I also wrote to other people, including the Fleet Air Arm



Two fine illustrations of an F4U-1A with a 1,000-lb. bomb on a Brewster centre-line rack. The undersurface view shows the belly bomb-aiming window below the centre-section, immediately behind the bomb. (Photos: Vought)



A blue-grey "bubble-top" Corsair taking off from the U.S.S. Core (CVE-13); probably an aircraft from the first Navy Corsair squadron, VF-12. (Photo: A. G. Simmons)

them down until there were no more. The first of a long line of fighting airplanes, the "Sweetheart of Okinawa" earned the affection of fighting men and earned it well.

©J. F. Dial, 1965.

Author and publishers gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following in the preparation of this Profile. A. Schoeni, H. Cunningham, R. DeLeva, H. Hope, B. R. Winbourne, Richard Atkins and R. B. Brown, all of Ling-Temco-Vought; Jack Hospers, d' E. C. Darby and the N.Z.A.H.S., D. W. Brown of Goodyear Aerospace Corp. and Alan G. Simmons.

#### United States Corsair Units

**U.S.M.C.:** VMF-111 (Devil Dogs), VMF-112 (Wolf Pack), VMF-122, VMF-123, VMF-124 VMF-212, VMF-213, VMF-214 (Blacksheep), VMF-215 (Fighting Corsairs), VMF-216, VMF-221 (Flying Falcons), VMF-222 (Flying Duces), VMF-223, VMF-225, VMF-311, VMF-323 (Death Rattlers), VMF-411, VMF-422, VMF(N)-532.

**U.S.N.:** VF-12, VF-17 (Skull and Crossbones), VF(N)-75, VF-82, VF(N)-101, VF-301.

(The above list of units covers known Corsair squadrons, and is not necessarily complete.)

#### Corsair Aces

Colonel Gregory M. "Pappy" Boyington, C.O. of VMF-124, 28 kills.  
Major Joseph Foss, C.O. of VMF-422, 26 kills.  
Lt. Robert M. Hanson, 25 kills, 20 of which were scored within 17 days.  
Major Kenneth Walsh, 21 kills.  
Major John L. Smith, 19 kills.  
Lt. Ira Kepford of VF-17, 19 kills.  
Major Marion Carl, 18½ kills.

#### PRODUCTION NOTES

Year	Chance Vought F4U-1, -1A, -1C and -1D	Goodyear FG-1A and -1D	Brewster F3A and -1A
1942	178	—	—
1943	1,780	377	136
1944	2,667	2,108	599
1945	74 (F4U-4 production commenced in 1944)	1,529	(Contract terminated July 1, 1944)
Total	4,669	4,014	735

Service Use	Type	U.S.N.	Royal Navy	R.N.Z.A.F.
	F4U-1	876*	95	—
	F4U-1A	1,232**	360	173
	F4U-1C	190	—	—
	F4U-1D	1,659***	150	192
	FG-1A	487†	99	—
	FG-1D	1,470****	843	60
	F3A-1A	305	430	—
	Totals	6,255*****	1,977	425

\* = Includes 12 converted to F4U-2 standard.  
\*\* = Includes 173 to New Zealand.  
\*\*\* = Includes 192 to New Zealand.  
\*\*\*\* = Includes 60 to New Zealand.  
\*\*\*\*\* = Includes 425 to New Zealand.  
† Includes, reportedly, 2 "Flat-top" versions.

#### SPECIFICATION

##### Dimensions

Wing span 40 ft. 11.7 in. Span (folded) 17 ft. 0.5 in. Length 33 ft. 4.6 in. Height (taxi position) 15 ft. 0.07 in. Height (wing folded) 16 ft. 6 in. Max. height (wing vertical) 18 ft. 3.2 in. Wing area 314 sq. ft.

##### Weights

Empty 8,694.5 lb. Gross 11,092.8 lb. Useful load 2,398.2 lb. Wing loading 26.6 lb./sq. ft. Power loading 4.72 lb./h.p.

##### Powerplant

One Pratt and Whitney 18-cylinder twin-row R-2800-8(W) Twin Wasp B Series with two-speed supercharger.

##### Powerplant Ratings

Take-off 2,000 h.p. at 2,700 r.p.m. Military 2,000 h.p. at 2,700 r.p.m. \*War Emergency 2,250 h.p. at 2,700 r.p.m. Max. Cruise 1,070 h.p. at 2,150 r.p.m. Economy Cruise 570 h.p. at 1,300 r.p.m.

##### Fuel Tankage

Internal 237 gallons. Normal Fighter 178 gallons. Overload Fighter 535 gallons.

##### Performance

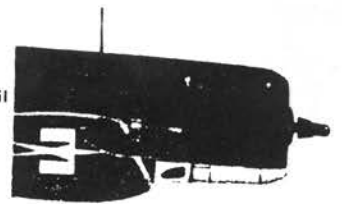
Max. speed 415 m.p.h. at 20,000 ft. Stalling speed 79 m.p.h. at sea level. Initial climb 3,120 ft./min. Service ceiling (normal load) 37,000 ft. Take off over 50 ft. obstacle (no wind) 1,430 ft. Landing over 50 ft. obstacle (no wind) 2,500 ft.

\*This rating refers to the -8W powerplant with water-ethyl alcohol injection, fitted to F4U-1D and the fourth FG-1D. The injection of this mixture allowed the increase of power above Military rating by acting as an anti-detonant. 10.4 gallons were carried in three tanks with 40% alcohol used for anti-freeze protection. Initiated by the ast ¼ n. of throttle movement, the device gave an extra 250 h.p.

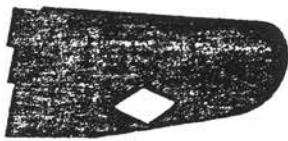
F4U-2 Corsair in non-standard night-fighter finish. U.S.N.



Radome detail



F4U-1 Corsair with non-standard barless national marking under port wing only. Red border to national marking was used from June to September 1943. U.S.N.

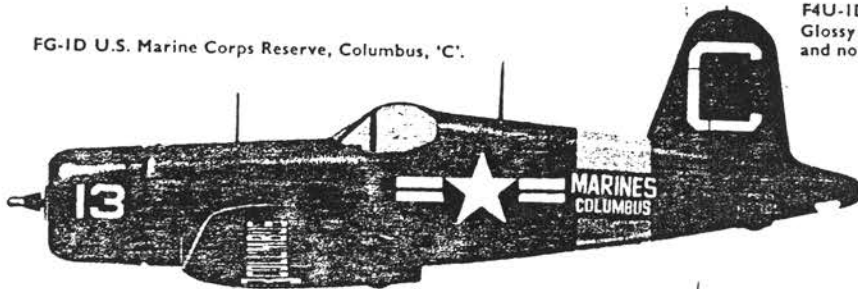


port and stbd wing marking of CV 13.



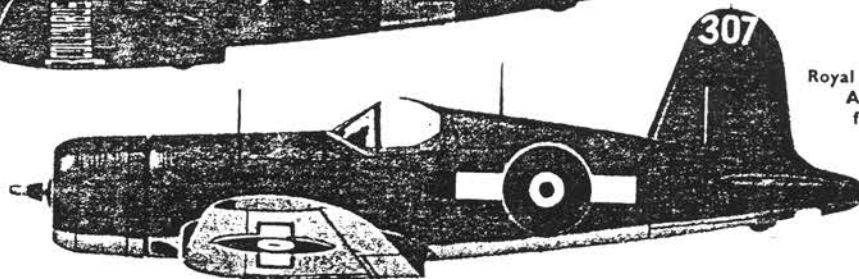
F4U-1D Corsair operating from U.S.S. Franklin, CV 13. Glossy sea-blue overall except for matt sea-blue cowl and nose forward of cockpit. U.S.N.

FG-1D U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Columbus, 'C'.



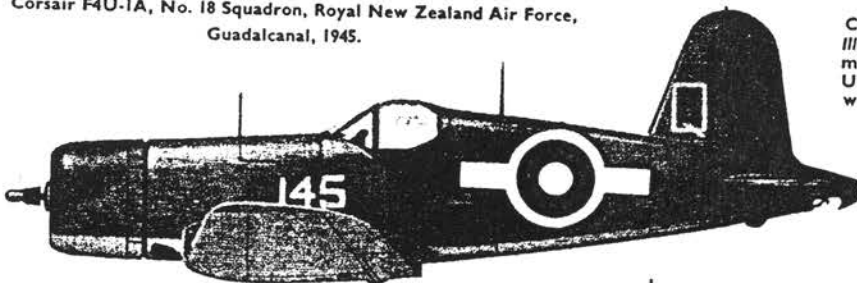
307

Royal New Zealand Air Force fin flash



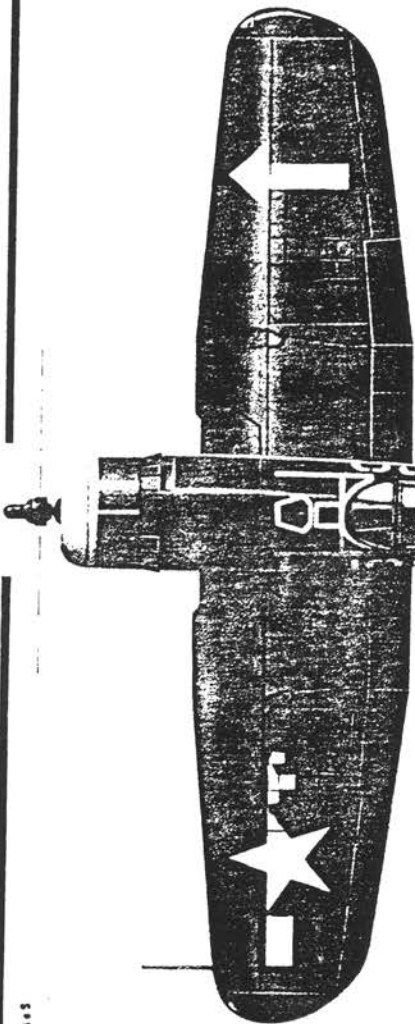
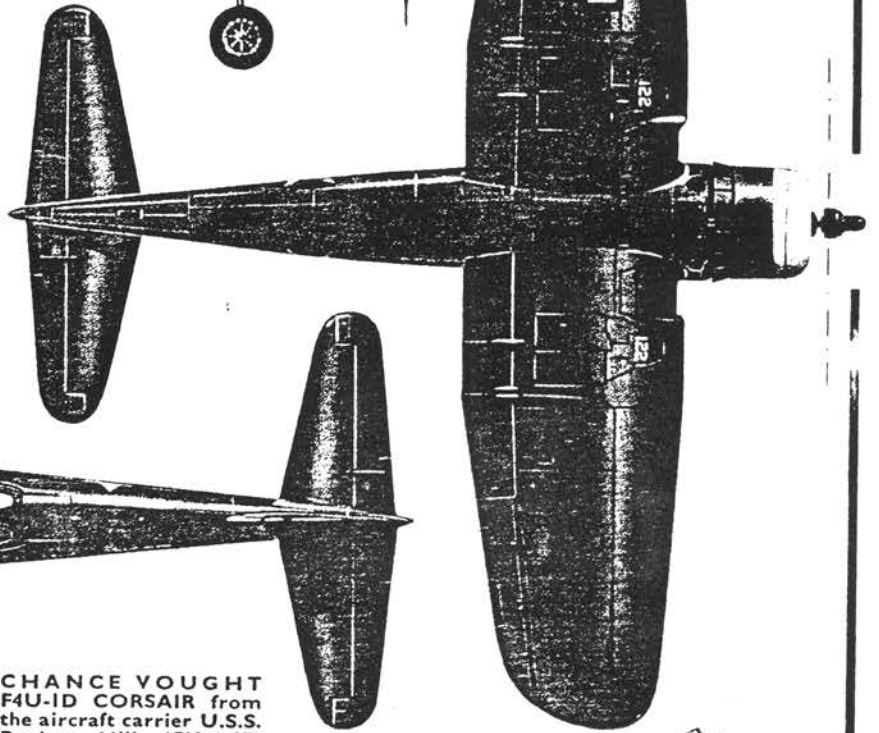
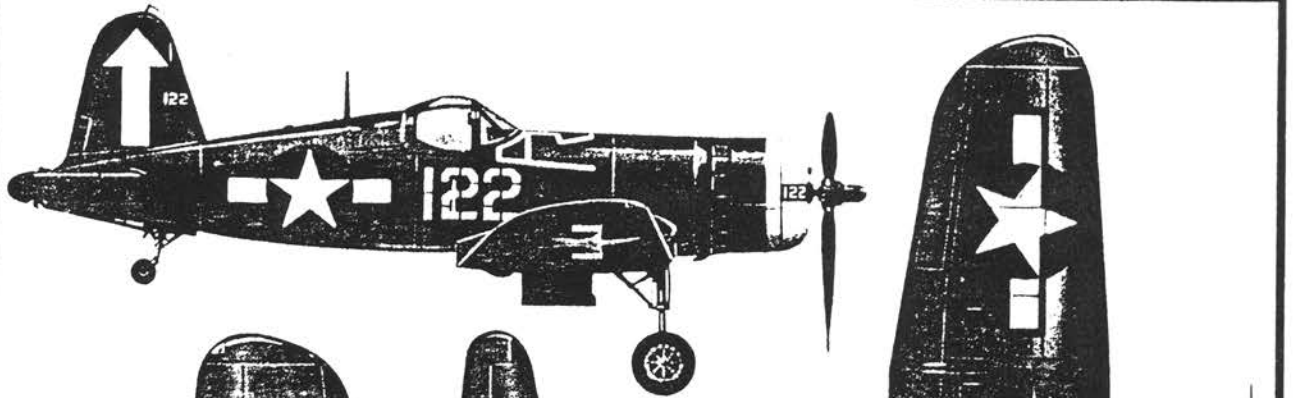
Corsair F4U-1A, No. 18 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force, Guadalcanal, 1945.

Corsair II (F4U-1A) Fleet Air Arm, H.M.S. Illustrious SWPA markings. The national markings usually conformed to standard U.S.N. practice but sometimes six positions were used.

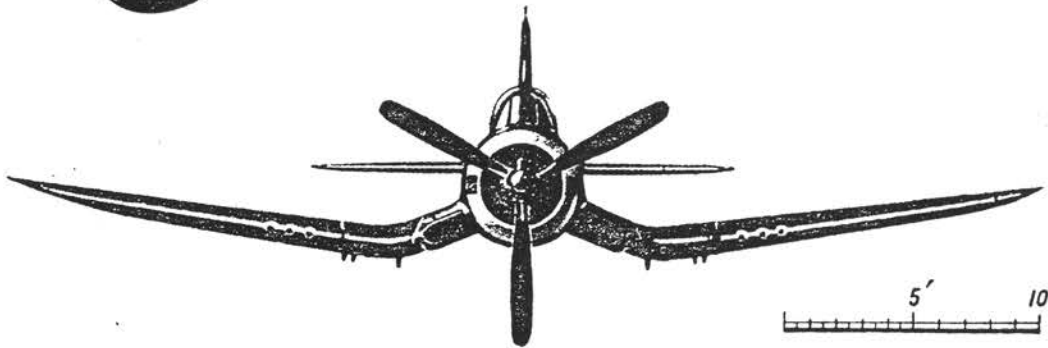


Corsair II (F4U-1A) Fleet Air Arm, Far East Fleet markings, six positions.





CHANCE VOUGHT  
F4U-1D CORSAIR from  
the aircraft carrier U.S.S.  
Bunker Hill (CV - 17)  
February 1945.



P. ENDSLEIGH CASTLE ARMS



CV 13.  
e cowl

15

# The Chance Vought F4U-1 Corsair

(The usual shipboard jibes and pokes published by his own shipmates when alive)

# LEADING PERSONALITIES of the DAY

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NAVAL HERO.



*"But think what it's doing for your waistline."*

## On his OWN

THIS IS A  
**Fighter Pilot**

## Let's take another look

HAMMY GRAY, an enormously senior lieutenant from that L'I'L OL' HOMETOWN of NELSON B.C. Rather on the PLUMP side he nevertheless reports himself fighting fit at all times of the day, particularly just after his ten minutes of P.T. in the early morning when he sometimes 'RELAXES' for a space in the Ante-Room, moaning quietly to himself. Especially playful at lunch and supper time, we have never been able to discover exactly why. He will speak lovingly of the benefits of 'soft WAT'R' and of the strange delights of DURBAN which he once enjoyed for a time. Once or twice he has been persuaded to give a modest account of the F.A.A.'s greatest operation and of his epic battle, single-handed ( 'there was I' ! ) with swarms of NARVIK class Destroyers in a Norwegian Fiord. He used to discuss his third, or was it his fourth, Squadron occasionally but since his escapades in the Desert, at El Alamein and at the Auberge with "4I" Squadron, this subject has been reduced to a shade of his colourful past. A modified ANGLO-CANADIAN-DURBAN accent lends dignity and authority to his words.

He favours the INDIAN LOPE as his favourite way of travelling from his seat to the Bar where he is often to be seen exuding his philosophy-- "I WANT THIS TO BE A HAPPY SQUADRON".

Ace Line-Shooter, even TWICE\*IN\*FACT BLAIKIE grovels at his feet, no subject escapes the subtleties of his calculating mind:

E.G. Of himself---- " Lt Gray, the World's greatest Fighter Pilot ".

*On the Level*

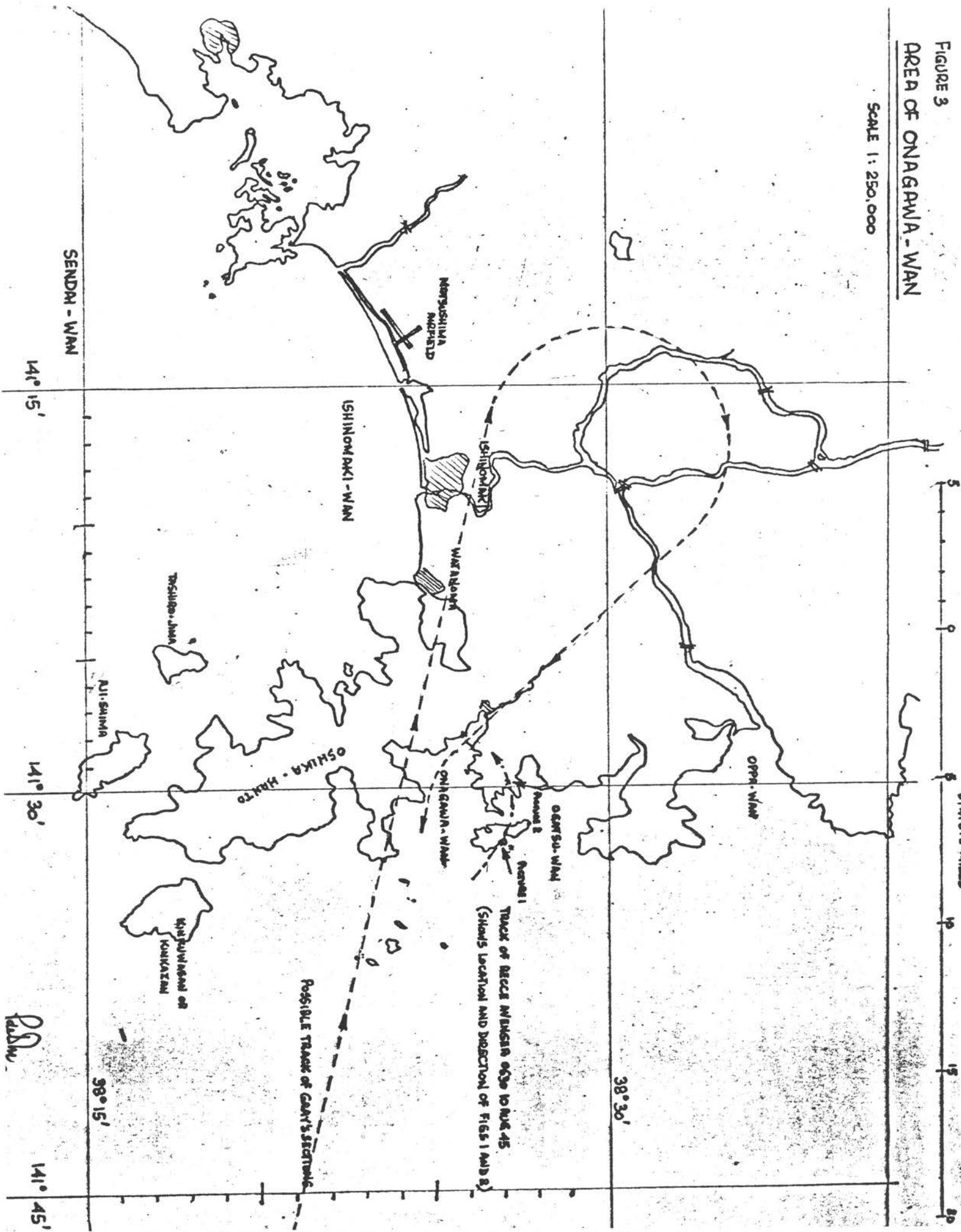
Of the Squadron----- "I want you to know (without shooting a line) that this is the finest Squadron I've ever been in!"

Of his Wingman---- "Not much experience not much time, but already he ranks with the IMMORTALS !"

"Say, what kind of an eye" These and many more like them, we lay to his charge and are written in the BOOK, moreover.

FIGURE 3  
AREA OF ONAGAWA - WAN

SCALE 1 : 250,000



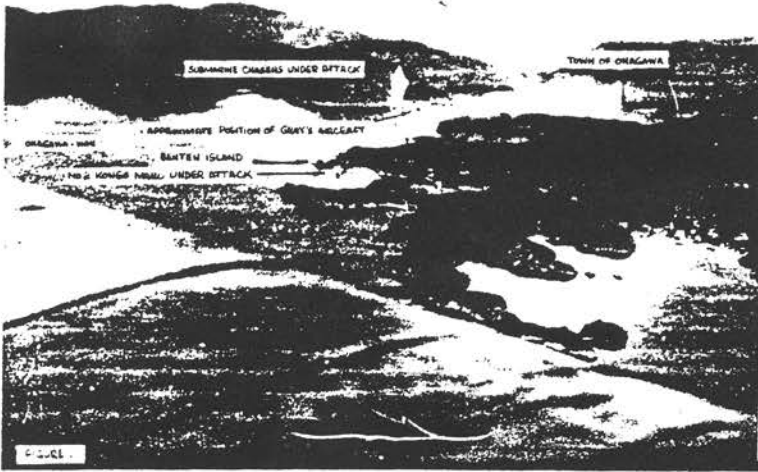


# THE SEARCH FOR LIAISON GRAY'S CORSAIR

15 (N/40) E. 1000 FT.

TOWN OF UTSUNOMIYA

TOWN OF ONAGAWA



1

DIRECTION OF PICTURE IS ABOUT 175°TT

15 (N/40) E. 1000 FT.

15 (N/40) E. 1000 FT.



FIGURE 5

2

KAKASAKI ISLAND JUST OFF PHOTO

ONAGAWA WAN

TOWN OF ONAGAWA

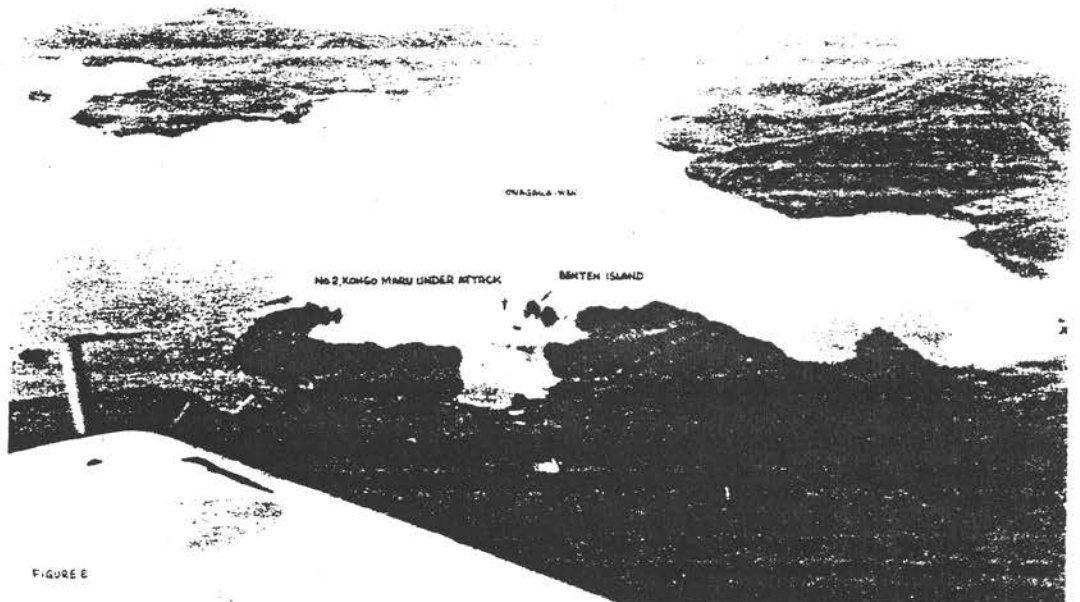


FIGURE 6

3

1. An attack on submarine chasers off the town of Onagawa. August 1945
2. A Japanese Kaibokan (escort) type B 'Etoro-u', a sister ship of the 'Amakusa', Imperial War Museum
3. The town of Onagawa and harbour are off picture to East. The 'Amakusa' was sunk approximately at position X at extreme right of picture.
4. An aerial mosaic of Onagawa Wan., Japan 9 Aug. 1945. Pub. Archives of Canada DND RCN F4768
5. The Chance-Vought Corsair flown by the Canadian Warplane Heritage, in the markings of Lieut. Gray's aircraft as established by the author. photo by C. Catalano



FIGURE 6

4



5

Historical research is very frustrating. A good researcher will not be satisfied that he has a fact until it has been checked and rechecked beyond question, but unfortunately this is seldom possible. With a few exceptions, people are just not good witnesses; they report what they thought to happen or what they expected to happen, and this is often written up by other people, who may well attempt to interpret what they hear. Read Chaz Bowyer on Alan Jerrard, for example, ("For Valour", page 114 et seq), or closer to home, what evidence is there to support the very detailed descriptions of the action in which William George Barker won his VC? Alan Clark has really used his imagination in the account on pages 177 et seq of his book, "Aces High". The combat report was not written by Barker, but by the Commanding Officer of No. 201 Squadron, Major C. M. Leman. Even reputable historians make errors through carelessness or laziness. One such author wrote that "Bishop had the nose engine cowling and interplane Vee-struts of his Nieuport doped in bright blue colour", whereas the well known photograph of Bishop leaning on the lower starboard wing of B1566, of which there is a very large copy in the RCAF Officers' Mess, Gloucester Street, Ottawa, clearly shows that the struts are varnished wood. So be skeptical about the "facts" which you read, they may not be truly definitive. Do not take it for gospel just because it is in print.

I certainly do not claim that the information which I have given in this article is the last word on Gray's part in the action in Onagawa Wan on 9 August 1945, since it is simply my own interpretation of various pieces of information which I have acquired. Hopefully, it will invoke comment and criticism from people who have further information or evidence, and, who knows, but one day a photograph of KD658 will turn up and show the side number 115. Then I will be satisfied.

In the meantime . . .

At 0800 hours on 9 August 1945, British Pacific Fleet Task Force 37 was steaming about 300 miles NE of Tokyo. A fighter/bomber operation (code name RAMROD) was in process, and the Corsair aircraft of No. 6 Naval Fighter Wing, HMS Formidable (Nos. 1841 and 1842 Squadrons) had been briefed to attack airfields in conjunction with a strike by Avenger aircraft. The first strike of twelve Corsairs, led by Lieutenant Commander Bigg-Wither, commander of No. 1841 Squadron, was already airborne and the second flight was ranged on deck. Aircraft were manned, and the Commander (Flying) had just given the order to start engines. Radio silence was in force.

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, DSC, RCNVR, of 1841 Squadron was leading the second flight. It is believed that he was strapped in by another Canadian, Lieutenant (A) W. H. I. Atkinson, RCNVR, a Hellcat night-fighter pilot of 1844 Squadron. Atkinson and another pilot were on attachment to Formidable, and Atkinson had recently received a field decoration, the immediate award of the DSC, for a very determined attack on a Kamikaze formation, of which three were shot down and the rest diverted from their target.

Gray's aircraft was a Corsair IV, serial number KD658. The side number (one of a block allocated to 1841 Squadron) was 115, and it carried a white X on the fin, identifying it as an aircraft from Formidable. The aircraft was painted dark blue overall, with standard British Pacific Fleet roundels and all lettering in white. It was carrying two 500-pound bombs on the fuselage racks.

While waiting for the Task Force signal to turn into wind to fly off aircraft, a signal was received changing the target. A reconnaissance aircraft had reported a small convoy in Onagawa Wan, and it had been decided to cancel the airfield strike and to attack this convoy instead.

Because of the radio silence, aircrew had to be advised of the change of plan by word of mouth. The Commander (Operations), Commander W. Elliott, sent Chief Petty Officer (Air) A. E. Sweet to advise Gray of the new target. Sweet threaded his way through the closely packed aircraft with their turning propellers, got up on Gray's aircraft and gave him his new orders, which Gray acknowledged.

Gray led his two sections, eight Corsairs, to the West until they crossed the coast of Honshu at 10,000 feet on the south side of Onagawa Wan. As they continued inland, the ships of the convoy could be seen on the starboard side and Matsushima airfield to

port. It is surmised that Gray broke radio silence at this point and informed his sections that he was going to attack the ships.

A look at the maps, Figures 3 and 4, indicates clearly that the best approach would be down the river valley running southeast into Onagawa Wan, across the harbour and on out into the bay. This is also the approach which best fits the descriptions of Japanese eyewitnesses and the circumstances of the attack on the frigate Amakusa, which was at anchor in the middle of the harbour. The distance from shore to ship on this track was well under half a mile, a very short distance. It seems likely that Gray brought his aircraft round to the northwest until they were lined up with the valley, target ship and harbour mouth, and then led them down in a steep dive to cross the shoreline as low as possible.

The Corsairs went in very low to carry out a skip-bombing attack. This type of attack gives a high probability of a hit, but the aircraft must be flown straight and level at low altitude and directly towards the target for several seconds, which makes it very vulnerable. The following description is ascribed to Gray's No. 2, whose name I have not yet discovered. Gray, leading the attack, met very heavy fire from the ships and from shore batteries. His aircraft was hit on the run in, apparently in the lower engine area, to the rear of which were the bomb racks. One bomb fell off and fire broke out. In spite of the flak and the fact that his aircraft was on fire, Gray pressed home his attack and released his second bomb, which was seen to register a hit. He was probably wounded because, instead of breaking and jinking violently after releasing his bomb, he turned to starboard and dived into the bay. His crash was also witnessed by Sub-Lieutenant John Blade, RNVR, of the second section. The time was 0945 hours.

The ship which he hit was thought at first to have been a destroyer, but turned out later to have been an escort vessel (kaibokan), the Amakusa.

In spite of the reportedly very intense flak, Gray was the only casualty, and a second attack was carried out under the deputy leader, Sub-Lieutenant L. MacKinnon, RNVR, (spelled Makinnon in Royal Navy List), when two more ships were damaged. The Corsairs then returned to the carrier, and six landed on safely, but Blade had a hydraulic problem and landed wheels up.

Two other Canadians are known to have taken part in the operation, on a later sortie Sub-Lieutenant (A) C. E. Butterworth, DSC, RCNVR, and Sub-Lieutenant (A) G. A. Anderson, RCNVR, both of 1842 Squadron. Butterworth survived the war and lives in Ottawa. Anderson was probably wounded during the attack, because he flew into the round-down when landing on, and his aircraft (KD587) fell into the sea. His body was not recovered. The position of Formidable at the time of this accident was 37°40'N, 145°02'E.

#### Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many people in government offices, publishing houses, museums and as private individuals, for their generous assistance. However, I would like to express my particular thanks to Dickie Sweet, Commander Keith Dedman, Mrs Judy Nelson Gracie, David Brown, Ray Sturtivant and Dr Ikuhiko Hata, who really went out of their ways to be helpful. And, in case anyone reading this article can provide further information, my address is 85 Avenue Road, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 0P1, Canada.

P.L. Markham  
85 Avenue Rd.  
Ottawa, Ont.  
K1S 0P1



Museum and David Brown. David Brown replied, "I still have lingering doubts: why should the Senior P have the lead aircraft in the third division, which would normally be the squadron AGO's division, assuming that 1841 had an AGO. And 119/KD560 *did* fly during the forenoon of 9 August, for Sub Lieut J. H. Bennett RNVR destroyed a Grace while flying Task Force CAP that morning with Sub Lieut G. R. Crossland RNVR in KD226. If KD560 was Gray's usual cab, then it did not long survive its owner, for it was shot down while being flown by a 1842 squadron pilot on 10 August—the pilot survived." Dickie Sweet and I had a long and interesting exchange of correspondence. I discovered that he was a senior instructor at the British Airways Training Centre, and that we had mutual interests related to my work at that time at the National Aeronautical Establishment. I visited him at the Centre. Dickie Sweet was one of the survivors of the Kirkenes incident in which 20 Albacores from 827 and 828 squadrons from HMS Victorious, escorted by 9 Fulmars, were to carry out a torpedo attack on shipping in Kirkenes harbour. This was a political mission to show some activity to the Russians. It was a disaster, the escort did not show up and 12 Albacores were lost.

#### PART II—ONAGAWA WAN, THURSDAY, 9 AUGUST 1945

In the search for the aircraft number I had acquired a number of odds and ends of information about the action itself, enough to make me want to find out a bit more than could be obtained from the Victoria Cross citation.

I was singularly unsuccessful in contacting any aircrew who had been involved in the RAMROD, fighter/bomber, sorties for which No. 1841 was tasked that day. I had, of course, spoken to the squadron commander, Dick Bigg-Wither, who led the first, and later spoke to Charlie Butterworth, DSC, of Ottawa, who was on a follow-up sortie into Onagawa Wan with No. 1842 Squadron. Chaz Bowyer evidently managed to contact L. MacKinnon, who was Gray's deputy leader, and John Blade, who was in MacKinnon's section, but he omitted to advise me. I tried Bigg-Wither again through the Fleet Air Arm Officers' Association, and it appeared for a while that I might be lucky, but nothing came of it. I also tried to contact L. A. Maitland, who was believed to have been in Gray's section, but it transpired on further research that he had been killed in action on 10 August 1945.

A good friend of Gray in Formidable was Lt. Cdr. Ben Hedges, USNR, who was the U.S. liaison officer on board. There is a picture of Gray and Hedges in "The Forgotten Fleet" by John Winton (Michael Joseph, 1969). I wrote to Hedges in care of the U.S. Navy, but they could not locate him and referred me to the National Personnel Records Center. They replied that they were "unable to identify a record of military service for the person named". I asked them to try again, and they replied that the "records of Commander Benjamin Van Doren Hedges show him to be deceased". Another dead end.

Then I tried to find out whether the Japanese had any records of the action. The Japanese Embassy in Ottawa was helpful, and after some time they put me in touch with Lieut. Kenkichi Mitani, who was navigating officer of the ship which Gray sank, the escort or sloop (kaibokan) Amakusa, 1,020 tons displacement. I did not hear from Lieut. Mitani, however, but when I was in the U.K. in 1977, I spoke to Chris Shores, the air historian, on the telephone. Chris Shores told me that a Dr. Ikuhiko Hata, of the Japanese Defence Academy, had been enquiring about Gray, and that he had referred him to me. So had David Brown. Dr. Hata's letter reached me shortly after I returned to Canada.

Dr. Hata was invited to the 33rd ceremony at the memorial, on the shore of Onagawa Wan, commemorating the action of 9-10 August 1945. In Buddhism, the 33rd ceremony is the last religious ceremony. Dr. Hata was with the Amakusa group, and took statements from a number of survivors, as well as crew members of other ships involved. A surprising picture started to emerge which became clearer with further correspondence.

The following Japanese ships were involved:

- Amakusa (Lt. Cdr. Masami Sakano), Sloop, 1,020 tons  
Sunk 9 Aug. '45 by Lieut. Gray. 71 killed.
- Ohama (Cdr. Yoshio Kawashima) Gunnery Training Ship,  
3,070 tons  
Sunk 9 Aug. '45. 10 killed.

- No. 33 (Lt. Cdr. Takeo Kajima), Minesweeper, 755 tons  
Sunk 9 Aug. '45, believed by U.S. aircraft. 35 killed.
- No. 42 (Lt. Cdr. Toshio Murita), Submarine Chaser, 420 tons  
Sunk 9 Aug. '45. 10 killed.
- Jyuko Maru, Oiler, 478 tons  
Sunk 9 Aug. '45.
- Meiji Maru, 150 tons  
Sunk 9 Aug. '45.
- No. 2, Kongo Maru, Auxiliary Minesweeper, 216 tons  
Sunk 10 Aug. '45.
- No. 6, Takunan Maru, Small ex-Fishing Boat  
Sunk. 2 killed.
- Gyosho Maru, Small Boat  
Sunk? 2 killed.
- Ebisu Maru, Small Boat  
Sunk? 1 killed.
- No. 161 (Warrant Officer Shampeï Takahashi),  
Auxiliary Submarine Chaser, 86 tons  
Survived.
- Nos. 88, 171 and 181, Auxiliary Submarine Chasers  
Probably survived.

A total of 157 Japanese were killed in the two days of the attacks on these ships. On 9 August, groups of F4U (Corsair) and F6F (Hellcat) aircraft attacked in waves between 0800 and 1500 hours. Seafires were also involved, because Lt. Cdr. J. Crossman, commanding No. 894 Squadron, HMS Implacable, bailed out and was captured. Thirteen aircraft were shot down and 9 crew members were killed. It is not clear whether any Japanese aircraft were involved. On 10 August, an Avenger strike from Formidable sank No. 2, Kongo Maru, off Benten Island (see Figures 1 and 2), but the crew all escaped ashore and there were no further casualties. Other ships were also bombed opposite the pier—probably the surviving submarine chasers.

Dr. Hata does not consider it proven that Gray sank Amakusa. However, it seems clear from survivors statements that Amakusa 'blew up' just after an aircraft passed and crashed in the bay 30 metres from No. 161 (W. O. Takahashi, witness). Only one aircraft crashed in the bay—Gray's Corsair.

David Brown has lingering doubts that 119 was not available to Gray, because it was flown during the forenoon of 9 August by Sub-Lieut. Bennett. The fact that it was "trapped in the hangar by two unserviceable aircraft . . . which could not be moved in the time available" (Sweet) simply indicates that it could not be ranged in time for Gray to use it. The possibility of its being flown later on, for that matter, earlier, is certainly not precluded.

Chaz Bowyer also seems to doubt Dickie Sweet's statement, in his case regarding the change of target. In his "For Valour" (William Kimber, 1978) he states, "The intended landfall for Gray's mission was Kinkawsan Point, a tiny island some 30 miles north-east of the large town of Sendai. After flying about 150 miles over the ocean, the two sections eventually made landfall at the mouth of Onagawa Wan bay (sic), and as Gray passed along the edge of the bay he spotted two Japanese destroyers, two destroyer escorts and several other vessels all anchored in the western end of the bay. Mentally noting these as a possible target, he continued inland, still searching for a primary airfield target as briefed. On arrival over his intended objective Gray quickly realized that the target had already been raided by some other Allied aircraft, which had created considerable damage. Seeing no point in 'wasting' bombs on a crippled airfield, Gray radioed to the other Corsair pilots that he intended attacking the shipping they had seen in Onagawa Bay instead". I can quite believe that this is how things may have appeared to MacKinnon and Blade, who had been briefed to attack airfields, and who would not have been aware of the change in plan. Gray evidently observed radio silence until very shortly before starting his attack on the ships. A look at the map in Figure 3 will show how statements by Sweet, MacKinnon and Blade can be reconciled. It does not follow that because statements differ they are necessarily contradictory. I have drawn a probable track for Gray's two sections, and it will be seen that Matsushima airfield, which was probably one of the original targets, would be clearly visible about 2 miles away on the port side. It may well have been attacked by Bigg-Wither's aircraft.