

March 1945 Form 540

357 Squadron

Place	Date	Time	Summary of events
Jessore			Part I – Operations
			The month of March 1945 proved to be a record month in many respects for 357 (S.D.) Sqdn & a total of some 1474 operational hours were flown. This effort involved some 149 sorties of which only 38 or 26.8% were unsuccessful. In most cases the unsuccessful ones were due to weather, particularly over Burma, where considerable trouble was experienced with ground haze, which in some cases, had the effect of 10/10ths cloud & completely obscured the ground. Generally speaking the weather has been fair, & the increased number of dusk & dawn drops (particularly the former) has no doubt accounted for the percentage of successes being as high as it is.
			Over French-Indo-China the weather has been generally good, although during the last part of the month a certain amount of SCu. was experienced by day. Over the Hanoi area the weather was bad, & aircraft which were successful in this area broke cloud over the sea & then flew in under the cloud base, which in some cases was down to 700'. One of the Squadron's aircraft, namely Dakota KJ921 captained by P/O T. S. Hunter was engaged in operations over this area in conjunction with an aircraft from the 322Loop? Carrier Squadron (U.S.A.A.F.). KJ921 did not return from this operation & it was later learned that the Dakota had crashed into a hillside on Hoi Ling Island posn. 21°37'N, 111°52'E. More details of this crash will be found later in the summary. This was the only loss suffered by the Squadron during the month.
			In Southern F.I.C. – the Saigon area – ground haze has been present & has caused a certain amount of trouble, although there have not been a very large number of sorties to that area, so that the percentage of successes has not been unduly affected.
			Over Malaya isolated storms have been experienced, either in the form of Cb or as actual showers. The Malacca Straits have been affected in this way.
			The month started quite quietly with 9 aircraft out on the first night, of which 6 went to F.I.C. Only one of these – to the Phnom Denh area – was unsuccessful & that was due to 10/10ths cloud over the area. A Dakota operation on the same night (Brave & Brass combined for the I.S.L.D.) caused some confusion, as the I.S.L.D. party were dropped on to a Force 126 reception. Apparently the two D.Z.s were only a matter of 4 miles apart, & from the Captains description of the target, it seems possible that the Force 136 Party were out of position.
			Operations were continued throughout the first week & were punctuated at regular intervals by sorties for I.S.L.D's party "Bulge". These people were known to be on the run & were getting very short of food so several sorties were flown without success, until F/Sgt. Bush, F. F. carried out a dawn search on the morning of the 8th, & located the party near Goteik viaduct.
			Perhaps the most important feature of the month was a political one which had a considerable bearing on the S.D. effort of the month – the Japanese action in taking over control of French Indo-China. As a justification for this step it was claimed that the French had been in secret communication with Allied Forces, had received arms from U.S. aircraft, had not fired on them, & had sheltered U.S. airmen, amongst other charges. The Commanding Officer of the French forces – Vice-Admiral Jean Decorix – was placed under 'protective custody' & Japanese troops commenced operations against

			French garrisons throughout the country. In the large towns – Hanoi & Saigon – French resistance was fairly quickly overcome, but in the interior, resistance is still taking place, & it seems probable that the French will eventually take to the hills & carry out harassing raids on lines of communication etc. aided by arms etc., dropped by the S.D. Squadrons and – according to the Japanese at least – the U.S.A.A.F.
			the news of the Japanese action was received by the evening of the 9th March & immediate action was taken by Force 136 & HQ., Strategic Air Force, - supply dropping sorties continuing from that date in increased volume. 357 Sqdn. were in a rather unfortunate position at the time of being in the middle of training some new crews, & thus the main weight of the first few drops fell on (or perhaps 'from') 358 Sqdn. aircraft. Before long however, 357 were in the fray as well, & several interesting sorties were carried out.
			Meanwhile, the 'Character' series of sorties in South Eastern Burma was being continued & on almost every operational night, some aircraft were operating on one or the other of the several pinpoints which this party operate. The Dakotas have carried out particularly good work in this area, whereas Liberators found several of the pin-points very difficult for good dropping for it was rather awkward for this less manoeuvrable type of aircraft to descend low enough due to the rugged type of terrain which is a feature of the topography of this area.
			Nickels have now become a feature of most operations, & 16 to 20 packets of 25 lbs. each are carried on almost every sortie. These are dropped at convenient & strategic spots en route to the D.Zs. On the 16th of the month, some special nickelling flights were carried out for the P. W. division in connection with the 19th Division's fight for Mandalay. Each aircraft carried 3570 lbs. of leaflets, & as 7 aircraft unloaded into the same area, the Japanese should be almost ankle deep in paper. Somewhere around 10 million were dropped in this one operation, which was spread over two nights.
			Malaya did not come in for much attention until the second part of the month but the claim which it had upon 357 Sqdn's aircraft was mainly notable for some very long range operations, even for 357 Sqdn., for Force 136's 'Carpenter/Trombe?' series & I.S.L.D's 'Mint' party, these being only a few miles North of Singapore. They were the longest operational sorties made by Liberator aircraft in the theatre & averaged 3750 air miles. These operations, which were carried out W/Cdr. L. M. Hodges, D.S.O., D.F.C. & F/Lt. T. H. Lee, were both successful. It was realised that F/O W. Churchill's record sortie in January, 1945 of 21 hrs. 55 mins would, no doubt, be broken & much conjecture reigned within the Squadron as to which of the two crews would create the new record.
			The honour finally fell to F/L. Lee who clocked 22 hrs. 45 mins for his round trip to 'Carpenter/Trombone' while W/Cdr. L. M. Hodges clocked 21 hrs. for his sortie to 'Mint'.
			The Dakotas have also flown some outstanding sorties during the month & perhaps the most interesting was S/Ldr. T. D? O'Brien's sortie to Dein Bein Phu in French Indo-China. This operation consisted of landing at Dein Bein Phu & evacuating French personnel, some of whom were wounded. This was the first time that an R.C.F. Dakota had landed in F.I.C. behind the enemy lines. Two days later the operation was repeated & was also successful.
			In China only one operation was carried out – F/O C. N. Egerton-Eves in a Dakota on Operation 'Glob', which was completed satisfactorily.
			The only operation in Siam was for O.S.S. when a party were successfully put into the country for operation 'Siren 3b'.
			A detailed synopsis of the operations carried out by the Squadron's aircraft during the month is enlisted overleaf.

Synopsis of Operations								
Code Name	Country	Area	Liberators		Dakotas		Total Sorties	Remarks
			S.	U.	S.	U.		
Character	Burma	Kemapyu	10	1	17	7	35	4 of the Dakota sorties were unsuccessful due to bad weather over the target area.
Nation	"	Pegu	5	5	3		13	3 Liberator sorties were met with no reception
Heavy	"	Kengtung	1		5	4	10	Bad weather was experienced over the target on the Dakota sorties.
Dilwyn	"	Hsenwi	2		6		8	
Conifer	"				1		1	
Brave	"				2		2	
Bloodhound	"	WA States			2		2	
Dromedary	"				2		2	
Calcutta Re-Sop	"			2		1	3	Bad weather over the D.Z. was encountered on all the sorties attempted.
Brest	"				2	1	3	
Nutshell	"				2		2	
Nickelling	"		3	1			4	
Triangle	"		2		2		4	
Review	"				1		1	
Future	"		1				1	
Bulge	"				1	1	2	
Burglar	"				1		1	
Bittern	"				1		1	
Bug	"					1	1	No Reception
Bandit	"					1	1	No Reception
Bazaar	F.I.C.		18	6	2		26	6 Lib sorties encountered bad weather over target area.
Opponent	"				2		2	
Desert	"		5				5	
Satirist	"			1			1	Bad weather over target area.
Barn Owl	Malaya		1	3			4	3 Lib sorties were met with bad weather over target area.
Carpenter	"		1	2			3	One Liberator was re-called while another encountered cloud cover over target area.
Hebrides	"		2				2	
Pontoon	"		1				1	
Mint	"		1				1	
Evidence	"		2				2	
Beacon	"			1			1	
Sergeant	"		1	1			2	
Globe	China				1		1	
Siren	Siam		1				1	
			57	23	53	16	149	
			Total Liberator Sorties 80					

			Total Dakota Sorties	69				
			Operational Sorties Flown – March 1945	149				
			Operational Hours Flown – March 1945	1474				
			A detailed summary quoting messages from the field appertaining to the operations carried out by the Squadron during the month of March 1945 & in some cases, February 1945, is attached as an appendix to this Record Book.					
			Aircraft on the Squadron as at 31/3/45					
			Liberators	Dakotas	Lysanders	Harvards		
			KH160 W	KJ889 D	V9889 F	FS794		
			KH166 S	KJ914 O	V9494 A			
			KH216 Z	KJ919 F	V9649 B			
			KH257 Q	KJ920 G	V9295 D			
			KH313 V	KJ922 J	V9808 C			
			KH325 N	KJ924 K	V9495			
			KH326 X	KJ925 L	T1688 E			
			KH391 Y	KJ 926 M				
			KH395 P	KJ913 B				
			EW179	KN304 H				
				KK180 A				
Jessore	March	1945	Part II – Administration					
	Mar. 6		The month of March opened with the marked event of the visit of the Allied Air Commander-in-Chief – Air Marshal Sir Keith R. Park K.C.B., K.B.E., M.C., D.F.C., who was conducting a tour of the Command.					
	Mar. 10		An Order of the Day was received from Air Marshal Sir Goy Garrod, K.C.B., O.B.E., M.C., D.F.C. – quote –					
			"On handing over to Air Marshal Sir Keith Park the command of the Allied Forces in South East Asia, I wish to send my best wishes to all ranks, men & women, from all parts of the British Empire, from the United States of America, and from the Netherlands, who have been serving under me. You are in the midst of great achievements. The battle in the air & on the ground is going well. The Japanese Air Force has been driven from the skies over Burma. The Japanese Army has suffered a heavy defeat. The Allied Air Command is in fine fettle & you have every reason to be proud & confident. Good luck to you all & a speedy victory."					
	Mar. 10		F/O A. G. Fenwick was appointed Unit Fire Officer.					
	Mar. 21		F/L P. Arkell assumed duties of Officer i/c Sgt. Mess vice F/O R. Carter.					
	Mar. 26		F/L G. Cashmore (Aus.9183) assumed the duties of P.S.I. Officer vice F/L J. H. Copley.					
			F/L J. E. Williams assumed the duties of Officer i/c Airmen's Mess vice Aus 51?0782 P/O K. Younger.					
			W/O J. H. Middleton assumed the duties of Sgts. Mess Treasurer vice W/O R. W. Bain (Aus.408361)					
	Mar. 30		The following Officers were detailed for attendance at all sitting of a General Court Martial to be held at R.A.F. Station, Jessore commencing 1000 hrs on Monday 2nd April					
			F/O D. H. Hulme		P/O F. C. Cooke			
			P/O F. W. Pearce (Aus.424296		P/O F. C. Co?tler			
	Mar. 31		As far as administration is concerned the month closed on a note of great upheaval, for it was arranged for al the N.C.O.s (Aircrew) of 357 Sqdn. to be moved from Jessore to Santola. A complete new military site had just been					

			erected at Santola & the move was carried out on Mar. 20 & 31st under the supervision of F/L P. Arkell, W/O J. F. Bryden & W/O W. V. Robertson. It was originally intended for the Santola site to consist of a combined 357 & 358 Sqdn. Aircrew N.C.O's Mess & as such it was working out quite well, but with the advent of 200 Sqdn., whose entire Squadron were accommodated in Santola, 'libenstraum' was greatly diminished.
			Santola is positioned approx. 4 miles North of Jessore.
			Thus the state of dispersal of personnel of 357 Sqdn is as follows.
			Officers & Ground Crews in the town of Jessore. Aircrew N.C.O's in the site of Santola.
			Welfare
	Mar. 8		The glad tidings of the arrival on the Squadron of the March allotment of Beer & Whisky was greeted with much delight & anticipation by all ranks. In all 158 ½ dozen quart bottle of beautiful beer & 106 bottles of 'soul-inspiring' whiskey were received.
			Recreation
	Mar. 11		The main recreational function of the month was, no doubt the Squadron Sports which took place on the 11th March. The usual track & field events were on the programme & in addition many novelty events, which put the Sports in the right spirit. Prizes were given to the winners & runners-up of the events. Amongst these prizes were 8 donated by S/L. C. R. O'Brien, I.S.L.D. & 60 Rubees each donated by Majors Warren & Thornton of Force 136 for the purpose of purchasing prizes.
			The day proved to be a great success & special mention should go to Aus.418600 F/O K. Buchanan, the Welfare Officer, for organising the whole affair.
	Mar. 9, 10 & 11		An R.A.F. Welfare Show – 'Lifeline' – visited Jessore & played very entertainingly to a packed house for 3 nights. The gist of the play, as the title suggests was the conveying of lease-lend goods across the Atlantic & a very human & significant topic was enacted with distinct skill. The play was staged in the R.A.F. Canteen at Jessore.
	Mar. 22		An E.N.S.A. show – 'Love in a Mist' – arrived in Jessore on the 22nd Mar. & for 3 nights entertained the personnel of R.A.F. Station Jessore with a very slick comedy. Jessore hardly looked the same place with a couple of white girls in its midst! This show was also staged in the R.A.F. Canteen, which is an ideal hall for such shows – if only cushioned chairs were available.
	Mar. 30		A 'Musical evening' was arranged to take place in the Squadron's own Canteen – consisting of a recording of Popular Classics. Quite a good attendance was drawn.
			The usual football & hockey fixtures were maintained during the month & keen interest is prevalent on the Squadron as to which Section will succeed in winning the Cup presented to the winners of the Inter-Section knock-out competition. The four teams left in at the moment are Squadron Headquarters & Signals Officers & Aircrew, Maintenance, and Armourers, Electricians, & Instruments. The final is due to be played off in April.
	Mar. 9 Mar. 14		A Squadron Soccer Trial Game was played off to select a Squadron CI & the chosen eleven represented 357 Sqdn. against 358 Sqdn. on the 14th March. This was a very evenly contested game & the winning goal was scored in the last few minutes of the game by F/O G. H. Lawrence of 357 Sqdn.
			Ecclesiastical
	Mar. 29		In addition to the usual Church Services held in Jessore, special Church Services were arranged for the Easter period by the English Church.
			Holy Communion was arranged for at 0630 hrs, 0715 hrs., 1200 hrs. & 1930 hrs. on Good Friday.

			Statement of Personnel Strength			
			As at 23/3/45			
			Officers	Airmen	Total	
			R.A.F.	42	600	642
			R.C.A.F.	45	22	67
			R.A.A.F.	7	16	23
			R.N.Z.A.F.		3	3
				Total		735
Jessore	March	1945	Part III – Personnel			
			R.A.F. P.O.R's 23/3/45			
			Postings			
			83720 F/L H. Cast G.D.(P)	posted from 357 Sqdn to H.Q. 231 Group (Supy pending reposting) w.e.f. 1/3/45.		
			152022 F/O J. W. Gardner G.D.(P)			
			115288 F/L L. G. Lewis, D.F.M. G.D.(P)	Posted to 357 Sqdn from U.K. w.e.f. 24/2/45.		
			165515 P/O A. W. Cumber G.D.(N)			
			151159 F/O S. F. Stevens D.F.C. G.D. (N)	Posted to 357 Sqdn from U.K. w.e.f. 23/2/45.		
			171179 F/O R. M. Ritchie D.F.M. G.D.(G)			
			Promotions			
			165395 P/O K. C. H. Williams G.D.(N)	Promoted to rank of Flying Officer (w.s.) w.e.f. 2/12/44.		
			Casualties			
			165151 P/O T. S. Hunter G.D.(P)	Killed on air operations on 1/3/45		
			165369 P/O G. N. Gillin G.D.(N)			
			Marriages			
			77370 F/L. J. E. M. Williams G.D.(P)	Married at St. John's Church, Calcutta to Marion Stella Leathersby (Spinster)		
			R.A.F. P.O.R's 15/2/45			
			Acting Ranks			
			88689 F/L T. P. O'Brien G.D.(P)	Granted the Acting Rank of Squadron Leader w/e/f 1/11/44.		
			33408 S/Ldr L. M. Hodges G.D.(P) D.S.O., D.F.C.	Granted the Acting Rank of Wing Commander w/e/f 24/11/44 on posting to W/Cdr. O.C. Post 357 Sqdn.		
			Postings			
			88689 F/L T. P. O'Brien G.D.(P) (A/S/Ldr)	Posted from 357 Sqdn (F/Lt Flying Post to 357 Sqdn (S/Ldr Flight Commander Post) w.e.f. 1/11/44.		
			190065 P/O. B. F. Payton G.D.(N)	Posted from 357 Sqdn to HQ. 231 Group w.e.f. 10/1/45.		
			Decorations			
			83720 F/L. H. Cast G.D.(P)	Provisionally awarded the Croix de Gueure by the French Authorities subject to approval.		
			190065 P/O. B. F. Payton G.D.(N)			
			88708 F/L K. P. Jones GD(P) (A/S/Ldr)	His majesty the King has approved the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to m/n Officer.		
			R.C.A.F. P.O.R's 12/3/45			

			Postings	
			Can.J.22963 F/L J. A. King	Posted from No. 3 R.F.U. to 357 Sqdn. w.e.f. 4/3/45.
			Can.J.23405 F/O A. B. Coy	
			Can.J.39146 F/O L. S. Stockwell	
			Can.J.44516 P/O J. B. Millar	
			Can.J.33938 P/O G. D. McGregor	
			Can.J.45828 P/O C. S. Campbell	
			Can.J.44466 P/O H. E. Jorgenson	
			Can.J.46765 P/O I. A. Palumbo	
			Can.J.46770 P/O C. M. Stearns	
			Can.J.44512 P/O K. M. Oddson	
			Can.J.45745? P/O J. W. Frieson	
			Can.J.23275 F/O W. J. Jackson	
			Can.J.45989 P/O K. M. Merriam	
			Can.J.45134 P/O G. F. McKelvie	
			Can.J.45350 P/O J. L. Beirn?es	
			Can.J.43348 P/O W. O. McDougald	
			Can.J.45844 P/O D. K. Jordan	
			Can.J.46053 P/O A. G. Diggins	
			Can.J.45921 P/O A. E. Duff	
			Can.J.45936 P/O H. G. Wagner	
			Can.J.45967 P/O W. E. Stevens	
			Can.J.44392 P/O E. H. Mercer	
			Can.J.46035 P/O R. W. Sanderson	
			Can.J.13790 F/L J. W. Gibson G.D.(N)	Posted from 357 Sqdn. to B.R.D. Worli w.e.f. 12/3/45
			Can.J.13790 F/L J. W. Gibson G.D.(N)	Posted to 357 Sqdn from HQ. 231 Group w.e.f. 13/1/45.
			Appointments & Promotions	
			Can.J.39528 P/O M. V. McFadyen GD(P)	Promoted Flying Officer (T) w.e.f. 10/6/44.
			Can.J.44365 P/O A. G. Houghan GD(P)	Promoted Flying Officer (T) w.e.f. 21/10/44.
			Can.J.44160 P/O J. Tyson GD(G)	Promoted Flying Officer (T) w.e.f. 7/10/44.
			Can.J.45070 P/O H. Walling GD(AB)	Promoted Flying Officer (T) w.e.f. 5/11/44.
			R.A.A.F. P.O.R's dated 15/2/45	
			Acting Ranks	
			Aus.420912 F/O F. G. Barlogie GD(P)	Appointed to Acting Rank of Flight Lieutenant on posting to F/Lt Flying Post w.e.f. 1/10/44.
			Aus.420912 F/O F. G. Barlogie GD(P) (A/F/Lt)	Posted from 357 Sqdn (Supy) to 357 Sqdn (F/Lt. Flying Post) w.e.f. 1/10/44
			Postings	
			Aus.408527 F/L O. S. Shave GD(P)	Posted as 'Killed' w.e.f. 1/11/44
			Aus.411553 F/L S. D. Titterington GD(N)	
			Aus.412179 F/L R. C. Powell GD(WG)	
			Aus.421390 F/L A. G. Carlton GD(WG)	
			Aus.421561 F/O J. Brand GD(P)	Posted from 357 Sqdn. to HQ. B.A.F.

			S.E.A. Comm Sqdn w.e.f. 25/1/45
		Aus.408745 P/O C. R. Tullon GD(WG)	Posted from 357 Sqdn. to BRD Worli (Supy pending embarkation) w.e.f. 14/2/45.
		Aus.420965 P/O L. B. T. Laney GD(WG)	
		Aus.423804 F/O E. T. Matley GD(P)	
		Aus.413266 F/O M. D. Seale GD(N)	Posted to 357 Sqdn from U.K. w.e.f. 30/1/45
		Appointments & Promotions	
		Aus.9183 F/O G. Cashmore GD(N)	Promoted to rank of Flight Lieutenant (T) w.e.f. 17/9/44.
		Aus.14407 F/O P. W. Bowles GD(P)	
		Aus.420965 P/O L. B. T Laney GD(WG)	Appointed to Commissioned Rank as P/O on probation in the R.A.A.F.
		Aus.415573 P/O P. A. Black GD(P)	
		Decorations	
		Aus. 423804 F/O E. T. Matley GD(P)	Provisionally awarded the Croix de Gueure by the French authorities subject to approval by Air Ministry.
		R.A.A.F. P.O.R's 14/3/45	
		Postings	
		Aus.410782 P/O K. Younger GD(WG)	Posted from 357 Sqdn. to H.Q. R.A.F. Bengal Burma (Airfield Inspection Duties) w.e.f. 24/2/45
		Aus.423804 F/O E. T. Matley GD(P)	Posted from 357 Sqdn. to BRD Worli (Supy pending embarkation) w.e.f. 21/2/45
		Honours & Awards	
		His Majesty the King has been most graciously pleased to award the Distinguished Service Order to the undermentioned officer.	
		F/O J. Churchill, D.F.C.	
		W/Cdr.	
		Commanding No. 357 (S.D.) Sqdn.	