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RAF Form 540

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

Of 150 Squadron

Place	Date	Summary of Events
Blida, Algeria	1/4/43	<p>The target is Bizerti. Crews detailed: S/Ldr Holmes, F/Lt Roberts, S/Ldr Pinkham, F/O Hanlon, Sgt Harris, Sgt Lee, Sgt Leckie. All aircraft took off between 0122 and 0200 hours. F/O Hanlon was forced to return early due to instrument trouble. Part of his bomb load was jettisoned safe at 3701N 0349E. All other aircraft reached the target area safely but found 10/10ths cloud. Flak positions and searchlights were used as aiming points by the crews between 0410 and 0430 hours. All returned safely to base. No successful photographs were obtained. All prints showed cloud.</p> <p>For the night of 1st and 2nd the weather is unsuitable for bombing, being the same as last night, so ops are cancelled.</p>
	2/4/43	<p>Conditions over targets still not too good and we are stood down for the day. Another new crew has arrived, being flown from Gibraltar by S/Ldr Booth of 142. They are experienced, having down eight trips over Europe. P/O Wykes is the pilot.</p>
	3/4/43	<p>Cloud conditions still unfavourable. NWASAF rang up early to cancel instructions.</p>
	4/4/43	<p>Conditions are improving and we have a target – Tonight our objective is the docks and installations at Trapani in Sicily. The crews, seven, are S/Ldr Holmes, F/Lt Roberts, F/O Hanlon, Sgt Penman, Sgt Harris, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Smith. All aircraft were airborne between 1940 and 2000 hours. The attack was highly concentrated, all aircraft bombing in twelve minutes from zero hour at 2330 hours. Sgt Mortimer obtained an excellent photo. F/O Hanlon also obtained a good one. Sgt Smith and Sgt Harris also obtained photographs but ground detail was insufficient for plotting. All were down safely by 0312 hours.</p>
	5/4/43	<p>Conditions are excellent for tonight. The target is Tunis with attention being paid to docks and shipping. All crews are new, this being the first trip for many. P/O Wilkes, Sgt Lee, Sgt Leckie, Sgt Seville, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Rayment, Sgt Tinsley and Sgt Alagrachi. An early attack is scheduled. All aircraft were airborne between 1812 and 1830 hours except one which got off at 1859 hours but took a shorter route so as to arrive in target area at zero hours. The attack was well concentrated, lasting only eleven minutes – first bombs went down at 2141 hours. Haze made location of target difficult. There was no cloud about. Leaflets in Italian, German and Arabic were dropped from all aircraft over enemy territory. All landed safely by 0108 hours. Six photos were obtained.</p>
	6/4/43	<p>Good conditions are forecast again. The target is again Tunis with the marshalling yards as aiming point. The crews are S/Ldr Holmes, F/O Hanlon, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Macdonald, Sgt Leckie, Sgt Rutherford, Sgt Smith, Sgt Jones. Take off was scheduled for 1805 hours. S/Ldr Holmes and Sgt Mortimer were delayed but got off at 1850 hours. Sgt Smith was forced to return due to turret trouble. All aircraft was on target between 2100 and 2120 hours. Conditions were excellent over the target. All crews obtained photographs. All returned safely between 2315 and 0028 hours.</p>
	7/4/43	<p>NWASAF 'phoned through with a target, the village and roads about Eufidaville and a cross roads on the Sonese-Tunis road. The object is to attack troop concentrations and transport on the roads. Met forecast cloud at 2000ft in the area and low cloud and showers at base. Operation cancelled at 1700 hours.</p>

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- 8/4/43 The target is again the cross roads at Eufidaville. We have been requested to go if at all possible.. The met situation is not promising and a gale warning has been passed out. Decision was made at 2000 hours when it was decided to cancel.
- 9/4/43 Conditions much more favourable. Base is clear. The target is still the Eufidaville area. Seven crews were briefed. S/Ldr Holmes, Flt Roberts, F/O Hanlon, P/O Wykes, Sgt Smith, Sgt Lee, Sgt Leckie. Our aircraft were airborne between 1820 and 1830 hours, reaching the target area about 2100 hours. One aircraft – Sgt Lee – stood off dropping flares by the light of which other crews saw motor transport on the roads. Bombs were dropped with good effect and one or two crews went down to low level and attacked with machine guns. S/Ldr Holmes on the southerly part of the target could see no traffic, so dropped his load on Sfax. Sgt Lee was forced to land at Bone due to shortage of petrol. The rest landed safely at base between 2350 and 0115 hours. One aircraft of 142 Squadron is missing. Several photographs were obtained showing roads and what may be transport moving.
- 10/4/43 The effort is to be divided tonight with each squadron taking an airfield. 150 Squadron is attacking Monserato field just outside Cagliari in Sardinia. Ten crews were detailed P/O Langlois, Sgt Tinsley, Sgt Seville, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Rutherford, Sgt Rayment, Sgt Alagrachi J, Sgt Alagrachi JE, Sgt Macdonald, Sgt Mortimer. All aircraft were airborne between 1755 and 1815 hours and all returned safely between 2330 and 0015 hours. The attack was well concentrated with time on target 2100 hours. Two stragglers found the ground defences active. Seven photographs were obtained. 142 Squadron lost another aircraft which was thought to have been seen to go down in flames. The Dept of Psychological Warfare report that the leaflets which we have been dropping in Tunisia and other parts are bringing results. At one point 8000 prisoners came over with the leaflets as passes.
- 11/4/43 The target tonight is again Eufidaville and roads and landing grounds within the vicinity. Met conditions are very good and an early take off has been laid on. Six crews have been briefed F/O Hanlon, P/o Wykes, Sgt Lee, Sgt Leckie, Sgt Smith, Sgt Chandler. Most crews reported transports moving northwards on the roads. Some success is claimed with bombs on the roads and also on the landing grounds near St Marie du Zit. Take off ws scheduled for 1800 hours which brought the aircraft in the area at 2030 hours. One aircraft flown by Sgt Leckie is missing. Some crews report seeing what might have been an aircraft going down.
- 12/4/43 Operations again tonight. The target is the landing ground at Mequina (Fochaillo) in Tunisia. Ten crews have been detailed F/O Hanlon, P//O Wykes, P/O Langlois, Sgt Lee, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Rutherford, Sgt Alagrachi J, Sgt Alagrachi JE, Sgt Macdonald, Sgt Chandler, Sgt Smith, Sgt Tinsley. A signal came through from the front this afternoon to say that our missing crew are all safe and uninjured. The aircraft was hit by a burst of flak which disabled it. The crew baled out but Sgt Leckie had to stay as it was then too low. He made a crash landing between the enemy lines and our own. All members of the crew walked to our own lines between the time of the landing and dawn. Take off was between 1750 hours and 1830 hours. Sgt Chandler in U was unable to take off due to engine trouble. Conditions along route were good with slight amounts of cloud. Small amounts of cloud were found in the target area but visibility was excellent. The attack was spread out between 2100 and 2145 hours. All landed safely between 2330 and 0040 hours.
- 13/4/43 Operations cancelled due to thunderstorms and poor visibility at Base.

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- 14/4/43 Our largest effort so far. The two squadrons are putting up 24 aircraft tonight in two waves. Twelve aircrews of 150 Squadron are to attack aerodromes and landing grounds in Southern Sardinia and 142 Squadron are attacking with twelve an hour and a half later. Our crews are F/O Hanlon, P/O Wykes, P/O Langlois, Sgt Chandler, Sgt Tinsley, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Alagrachi J, Sgt Rayment, Sgt Lee, Sgt Smith Sgt Alagrachi JE, Sgt Macdonald. All were airborne between 1820 and 1830 hours and landed safely between 2315 and 0005 hours. The attack was spread over Villacedro, Deccimomannu and Elnas. Several crews reported seeing aircraft on the ground and several good photos were obtained.
- 15/4/43 Met conditions are not good tonight but it has been decided to put on a reduced effort, each squadron is putting up eight aircraft. The target is the old standby – Bizerti. The crews are S/Ldr Holmes, F/O Hanlon, P/O Langlois, Sgt Lee, Sgt Seville, Sgt Smith, Sgt Tinsley, Sgt Mortimer. Sgt Mortimer was scrubbed as he was involved in an accident when one of our lorries overturned in attempting to avoid some natives on a truw(???). Cpl Frennah, LAC Lupton, LAC Hartley, LAC Smith, AC Price and Cpl Marston are detained in SSQ slightly injured while AC Dearden has a fractured collar bone.
- 16/4/43 Since these men were all armourers we are in a serious position as regards bombing up. Briefing at 2300 hours for tonight and take off after midnight.
- 17/4/43 All aircraft were airborne between 0020 and 0055 hours and landed safely at base between 0605 and 0625 hours. Sgt Seville failed to take off due to engine trouble. Conditions on route were not too good but in target area visibility was good and cloud well broken. A very successful and concentrated raid, all aircraft bombing between 0330 and 0442 hours. Ground defences were active. Two of our aircraft being damaged. Six excellent photos were obtained.
- We have another target for the night 17/18th, this time the docks and marshalling yards at Tunis. Ten crews have been detailed P/O Wykes, Sgt Alagrachi Snr, Sgt Alagrachi Jnr, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Rutherford, Sgt Macdonald, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Rayment, Sgt Seville and Sgt Chandler. All aircraft took off between 1815 and 1845 hours. Conditions were good over target and a concentrated attack was made between 2128 and 2138 hours. All aircraft were directed to Maison Blanche due to a sirocco which made Base unserviceable. Sgt Chandler is missing. Seven photographs were obtained and plotted.
- 18/4/43 Conditions at Base are very poor. Another sirocco is expected. Operations cancelled.
- 19/4/43 Fog and low cloud at base. Very poor outlook. Operations cancelled. Sgt Chandler and his crew picked up by a destroyer off Algiers and taken to Gibraltar.
- 20/4/43 A front moving through from the west, causing low cloud and thundershowers. Impracticable for ops. Operations cancelled.
- 21/4/43 Low cloud affecting target areas. Ops. Scrubbed again. Our full complement of men have arrived in Algiers and we shall now be up to establishment in all branches. P/O Caskie our Bombing Leader is promoted to F/Lt web(???) March 18/43. S/Ldr Holmes went to Gibraltar for our missing crew.
- 22/4/43 Again conditions are very poor. Though Base is clear. Ops. Cancelled by NASAF. S/Ldr Holmes returned with Sgt Chandler and crew.
- 23/4/43 Conditions better tonight. The target – Bizerti. Ten crew detailed F/Lt Vincent, P/O Wykes, P/O Langlois, Sgt Tinsley, Sgt Seville, Sgt Alagrachi Snr, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Lee. Sgt Tinsley was forced to return early with an oil leak.

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After taking off between 1815 and 1830 hours the rest of the crews found cloudy conditions which cleared in target area. The attack lasted from 2047 to 2108 hours and due to haze the aiming point was difficult to locate. All landed at Base between 2312 and 0027 hours. Seven photos were obtained but none plottable. A large reinforcement of three officers and 295 men landed at Algiers bringing up the Squadron to a full strength Squadron. The Squadron Adjutant F/Lt A.R. Pugh re-joins the Squadron. F/Lt Crabb joins the Squadron as its Medical Officer and P/O Davies as Intelligence Officer.

24/4/43 Conditions in target area poor – Operations cancelled. Sgt Chandler and crew are in SSQ suffering from exposure. The aircraft was holed by flak over Tunis, the petrol tanks damaged. The aircraft continued to fly till Cape Malfen was sighted when the petrol supply failed. The pilot ditched the machine and the crew took to the dinghy. They remained afloat until picked up by a destroyer 36 hours later.

25/4/43 Base conditions fair. Target good. The target is Decchimomannu in Southern Sardinia and twelve crews have been detailed. The take off is scheduled for 23.30 hours. The crews are S/Ldr Holmes, F/O Hanlon, P/O Wykes, Sgt Lee, Sgt Leckie, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Alagrachi Jnr, Sgt Tinsley , Sgt Seville, Sgt Macdonald, Sgt Rutherford, Sgt Smith. Due to low cloud and poor visibility take off was delayed half an hour in order to ensure a daylight landing for all crews. Five photographs were obtained. A party left today for U.K.

26/4/43 All aircraft were airborne 0000 to 0015 hours. Conditions on route were poor but the target area was much better. Several crews remained in the area for a long time, S/Ldr Holmes for 80 minutes and most crews considered they had bombed the target. Due to the cloud base of little better than 200ft a general diversion was made to Maison Blanche. Four of our aircraft returned to Base while the rest landed at Maison Blanche.

Continued low cloud at Base. Operations cancelled. A signal was received today awarding the DFC to the following:- F/Lt N. F. Vincent, F/O C.R. White, F/Lt J.R. Roberts DFM and P/O J.G. Swain. The following were awarded the DFM:- Sgt K Brearey, Sgt R Anderson, Sgt J Lepine, Sgt W Lanchberry, Sgt M Penman.

27/4/43 A party left today for Fontaine Chaude. There are variable amounts of cloud over Base which, while clearing in the afternoon, were forecast to reform again later. There are 9/10 cloud over the target areas also and so once again operations are cancelled.

28/4/43 Conditions are better today and although 6-10/10 medium cloud is present for the Tunis and Bizerti areas, it has been decided to detail 12 crews for operations, the target being El Aonina aerodrome near Tunis. The crews are F/Lt Vincent, P/O Langlois, Sgt Leckie, Sgt Smith, Sgt Rimmer, Sgt Alagrachi Snr, Sgt Tinsley, Sgt Lee, Sgt Rayment, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Seville and Sgt Alagrachi Jnr.

There was much cloud on the way to the target and thundery conditions with showers, considerably reduced visibility within immediate approaches to the target area. Haze and intense darkness increased further the difficulties of pin pointing. However, Sgt Smith placed a stick of incendiaries diagonally across the aerodrome (confirmed by photographs) and other crews were able to bomb on the fires with considerable precision. Little opposition was encountered and with one exception all the crews were able to press home the attack. Sgt Rimmer was unable to find the target area and at daybreak jettisoned his bombs over enemy territory and landed at Bone owing to shortage of petrol and engine trouble. All the remaining aircraft landed safely at Base between 0659 and 0740 hours except (J) Sgt Seville which landed at Bone. Take off was between 0050 and 0123 hours

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and the attack was carried out between 0423 and 0434 hours.

29/4/43 The Squadron has been detailed to attack Bizerta/ Sidi Ahmed aerodrome and ten crews have been selected for the operation:- S/Ldr Holmes, P/O Langlois, P/O Wykes, P/O Hanlon, Sgt Mortimer, Sgt Macdonald, Sgt Rayment, Sgt Alagrachi, Sgt Leckie, Sgt Rutherford. All the aircraft took off between 2346 and 0007 hours and all the crews claim to have bombed in the vicinity of the aerodrome between 0246 and 0359 hours. Visibility was very poor in 10/10 cloud and thundery showers and pin pointing was further hampered by intense darkness and no definite results of the bombing were observed. Flak was light and ineffective with one exception all aircraft returned safely to Base between 0535 and 0625 hours. At approximately 0500 hours B (Sgt Leckie) crashed near Sonima on the return journey and all members of the crew were killed.

30/4/43 Owing to weather conditions, the Squadron was stood down from operations today.

A.A.N. Malan

Wing Commander, Commanding

150 Squadron, Royal Air Force

8/4/43 P/O W.E. Wykes 139812 posted from United Kingdom for flying duties.

P/O C.F. Bond 139729 posted from United Kingdom for flying duties.

10/4/43 F/O (A/F/L) A.R. Pugh 76171 posted from United Kingdom for Adjutant duties.

14/4/43 F/Lt C.R.T. Crabb 62628 posted from United Kingdom for Medical duties.

24/4/43 F/Lt (A/S/L) R.M. Pinkham 42765 posted to United Kingdom.

P/O (A/F/L) T.D. Grant 126524 posted to United Kingdom.

P/O W.J.N. Holmes 117415 posted to United Kingdom.

P/O O.A.M. Webb J16409 posted to United Kingdom.

27/4/43 P/O K.R. Bubb 132809 posted from United Kingdom for flying duties

P/O J Davies 131745 posted from United Kingdom for Intelligence duties