

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 and 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.

Correction:
The 4.20!

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.

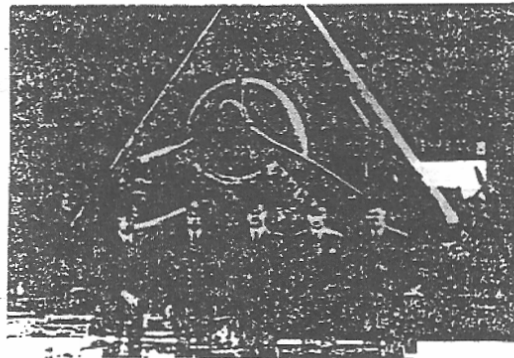
Sometime after the first group of Officers had left, a signal was received cancelling the proposed trip to Belfast. The aircraft are being left at Hatston.

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 7th

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 bombing. 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 Maiden 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 Skaebrae. The D.L.s went safely, though 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 and 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 Wardroom 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 Captain 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 ERDAL'S 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 cheated 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 marvelously. 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 1000lb 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 signaled 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 CO2 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 Alten 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 its 500 lb or a Corsair & its 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 McKinnon'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 quiet 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 of 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 Skaeabrae. 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 its 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 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/cs. 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.

Sep 15th Remaining Pilots D.I.'d their cabs in the rain, started engines and warmed up. Foul weather.

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 crews 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 ropey one 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. Marvelous 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 ship's company and Squadron personnel. Squadron Officers fell in a signal 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 were 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 its 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 football 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 maneuverable the Ventura is!

The Squadron played football against the Stokers in the morning & won 3 - 0.