

211 Squadron RAF

Greece

1940 – 1941

An Observer's notes and recollections



C. F. R. Clark

211 Squadron RAF Greece 1940 – 1941

An Observer's notes and recollections

C. F. R. Clark

Compiled and published by D. R. Clark,
P.O. Box 96, Latham ACT 2615, Australia
for the author, in a limited edition of 10 copies of which this is copy number:

March 1998

© C. F. R. Clark, D. R Clark 1998

Foreword

My father, Cyril Frederick Robert Clark, was posted to 211 Squadron RAF as an Observer in September 1940. The Squadron, then operating in the Western Desert of North Africa, transferred to Greece later that year.

As a boy, I read my father's copy of *Wings over Olympus*, about the Greek campaign. Many years later, I had been looking out for books about 211 Squadron in Africa and Greece, when, about the time of his 75th birthday, *Wings Over Olympus* turned up. Some time later I came across *Air War For Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete*, which I promptly lent him. The notes and recollections that resulted were written for me by my father in 1996 and 1997 from memory, from his own annotated copy of *Wings Over Olympus*, and from his Observer's Logbook.

The *Aircrew in Greece* section shows all aircrew posted to 211 Squadron in Greece from November 1940 to April 1941. My father's lists show complete crews by Flight, and include those crews who replaced others killed or missing in action. Later transfers between Flights, replacements and postings are shown by the author's footnotes. A short list of other Squadron personnel follows the A Flight crew list, along with two flight formation diagrams. The crew list layout is not intended to relate to the diagrams. In his Note at the end of the section, the personnel listed by date are those killed or missing in action during his time in the Squadron.

In the 8 months from the end of September 1940 to the end of May 1941, he took part in some 55 operational flights, of which 40 were raids, offensive reconnaissance or escort duty. In the remaining sections, the author has described these events by listing all the entries from his Logbook for this period, showing date, aircraft no, crew, destination (and often home airfield), and purpose; with his added comments and recollections, and cross-references to C F Shore's books *Fighters Over the Desert*; *Air War For Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete*, and *Dust Clouds in the Middle East*.

For most of the period in Greece, his crewmates were Sgt Jock Marshall DFM (Pilot) and Sgt Haggis Baird, (Radio operator/rear gunner). He refers to the crew variously as Sgt Marshall and Co, Sgt Marshall et al or simply Sgt Marshall (and later, Sgt Marshall DFM). My father's original allocation of crews to each Flight was made from memory, following the loss of his RAF Notebook after his return to the United Kingdom in 1945. In reviewing my compilation, my father has made corrections and further comments to his original text (shown in small italics).

Written for one familiar with the story, some points are passed over without comment. I have therefore included a *Historical Note*; and added notes to his text in square brackets, for the few remaining inconsistencies and for certain amplifications. I have omitted most of his lavish use of capitals (eg in person and place names) and the dash, which stem from Logbook usage. The rest is the author's own inimitable style.

D. R. Clark
LATHAM ACT
January 1998

Historical Note

211 Squadron

In the mid-summer of 1937, 211 Squadron was reforming at Mildenhall after a break of 18 years. Equipped first with Hawker Audaxes, then Hinds, the Squadron spent a year working up before being posted to Middle East Command, Egypt, in May 1938. There they were to be based in turn at Helwan, Ramleh in Palestine, Helwan and Ismalia. In April 1939, the Squadron was re-equipped with the Bristol Blenheim I before moving to El Dabaa in the Western Desert of North Africa, where my father joined them on 15 September 1940.

As a unit of the Western Wing of the small RAF contingent sent to Greece in November 1940 under Wing Commander J. H. D'Albiac, 211 Squadron mainly operated in support of the Greeks against Italian forces in Albania. In March and early April 1941, the air situation deteriorated rapidly. The Easter Sunday raid on the Monastir Gap, against elements of the advancing 40 (Motorised) Corps under General Stumme (9th Armoured, 73rd and SS Leibstandarte "Adolf Hitler" Divisions), virtually ended 211 Squadron's offensive part in the campaign.

Although withdrawn through Crete to Egypt by 23 April, the precarious situation in Syria and Iraq saw the Squadron almost immediately transferred to Palestine to take part in the brief campaign against the Vichy French during May 1941. In June 1941, the Squadron was at last relieved of front-line duty, retiring to Wadi Gazouza in the Sudan for training operations associated with 72 OTU. My father remained with them there until January 1942.

Bristol Blenheim I specifications

The Blenheim entered RAF service in 1937 as a "twin engined high-performance medium bomber". In 1937 it was as fast as any fighter then in the RAF, with a quoted maximum speed on service entry of 285 mph. By 1941 the Blenheim was obsolescent if not obsolete.

General:	Twin-engined, mid-wing cantilever stressed-skin monoplane, fabric-covered control surfaces.
Crew:	Pilot; Observer (Navigator/Bomb Aimer); Wireless Operator/Rear Gunner. A well in the centre-section carry-through could take one passenger, or freight. In emergency, it was possible to carry up to 6 passengers.
Engines:	2x840hp Bristol Mercury VIII.
Armament:	One fixed forward-firing .303 Browning machine gun, one turret-operated .303 Vickers K gun.
Bomb load:	1000lbs, variously disposed, as 4x250lb, 2x500lb, or these mixed with the Standard Small Bomb carrier (SSB) for incendiaries, anti-personnel bombs, or with the external Light Series carrier commonly fitted in Middle East Command.
Range:	1,125 miles (at 220mph with full load).
Maximum speed:	Variously quoted as 265mph or 285mph at 15,000 ft. Neither speed would have been achievable in level flight for aging operational aircraft in 1941.

Usage and abbreviations

ACM	Air Chief Marshal
AC	Air Commodore
CI	Chief Instructor
F/Lt	Flight Lieutenant
F/O	Flying Officer
P/O	Pilot Officer
Sgt	Sergeant
S/Ldr	}Squadron Leader
S/L	
W/Cdr	}Wing Commander
W/C	
W/O	Warrant Officer
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
MT	Motor Transport
SSB	Standard Small Bomb load
T/B	Turn back
Very	Pistol firing large, pyrotechnic coloured-light cartridges for recognition purposes, landing permission and so on. Hence Very light: the firework cartridge.
VGO	The single Vickers K Gas Operated machine gun, firing pan-fed ammunition, mounted in the rear, power-operated turret.

Acknowledgements

The valuable research facilities of the National Library of Australia and the Australian War Memorial Research Centre, and the expert, kindly and cheerful assistance of their highly professional staff made the compiling of this small book possible and very absorbing. Other assistance came from the UK Public Records Office and Tim Hughes.

The books by Christopher Shores, *Fighters over the Desert; Air War For Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete 1940-1941* and *Dust Clouds in the Middle East* are undoubtedly the best available published sources for this period.

The best unpublished sources are clearly *Air Historical Branch RAF – Narrative – Middle East Campaigns – Vol I – Operations in Libya and The Western Desert: September 1939 to June 1941* and *Vol II – June 1941 to January 1942* (AWM 220 Items 15, 16). Unfortunately *Volume VI – Operations in Greece* was never part of the AWM set. It is present, with the other Middle East volumes, in UK PRO AIR41/28.

I started out to make a simple copy of the notes made for me by my father. The puzzles revealed by these notes and the available books led me into more and more research, and so the copy became a little book. My parents responded with patience and equanimity to my endless questions in trying to understand the events of one violent Winter and Spring now over half a century ago. The characteristically laconic understatement of the story presented here will be well understood by those who, at home and abroad, had a part in those days.

Aircrew in Greece

Wings Over Olympus: 211 Squadron crew lists

'A' FLIGHT

S/Ldr Gordon-Finlayson DSO DFC ('The Bish' or 'GF') — Squadron CO

S/Ldr Nedwill

F/Lt Jones (Potato)

S/Ldr Irvine

S/Ldr Blomfield

P/O Davis (Gerry) — P/O [Bevington-]Smith (Smithy)*

P/O Geary (Arthur) — Sgt Jones (Taff)¹

F/Lt Farrington (Dinkum) — Flight Commander

Sgt Tickner (Tick)

Sgt Martin (Ace)²

F/O Dundas DFC (Ken)

Sgt Page (Len)

Sgt Jones (Taff)¹

P/O Herbert (Herby)

Sgt Dunnett (Jimmy)

Sgt Young (Jock)**

P/O Cox (Pip)

Sgt Martin (Jerry)

Sgt Hughes (Geordie)

Sgt Marshall DFM (Jock)

Sgt Clark (Nobby)⁶

Sgt Baird (Haggis)

P/O Hooper³

Sgt Richmond (Wonderboy)

Sgt Martin (Ace)²

F/Lt Barratt (Keeper) — IC Stores

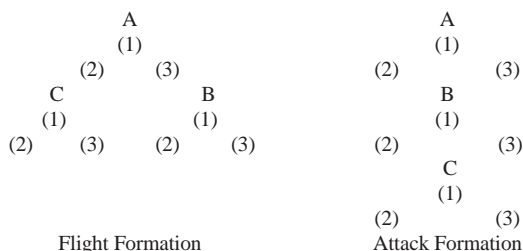
W/O Clark — Sqdn W/O (Sir) (Discipline etc)

F/Lt Squires (Doc) — M/O

F/Sgt Bagshaw (Flight) IC 'A' Fight groundcrew

F/O Williams (Willie) — Intelligence

F/O Fabian (Curly) — IC Stores



* This is an error. P/O Bevington-Smith (Smithy) was Observer in the crew of P/O Cox (Pip); but after 22 Jan [1941] Sgt Martin (Jerry) replaced him. ** (Doug)

‘B’ FLIGHT

F/Lt Doudney DFC (George) — Flight Commander
Sgt Cavanagh (Paddy)⁵
Sgt Wright (Titch)

F/O Clutterbuck
Sgt Stack (Bill)
Sgt Sharrat (J.G.)⁴ — Sgt Duffy (Duffy)

F/O Delaney (Duke)	P/O Hooper ³
Sgt Pollard (Vic)	Sgt Geary (Steve)
Sgt McCord (Jock)	Sgt Sharrat (J.G.) ⁴

F/O Buchanan (Buck)	F/O Austin (Jock)
Flight commander after posting of F/Lt Doudney	
Sgt Brooks (Rajah) — Sgt Cavanagh ⁵	Sgt Thompson (Tommy)
Sgt Patterson (Geordie)	Sgt Inman (Terry)

F/O Campbell (Bobby)	Sgt Baker (Frank)
Sgt Beharrel (John)	Sgt Hay (Bob)
Sgt Appleyard	Sgt Checketts (Check)

Sgt Davis (Doug)*
Sgt Stalder
Sgt ?***

‘C’ FLIGHT

F/Lt Jones DFC (Potato) — Flight Commander
Acting CO on death of S/Ldr Nedwill
Sgt Dennis (Peter)
Sgt Shimmin (Willy)

P/O Thompson DFC (Tommy)	P/O Pearson DFC (Twink)
P/O Hogarth	Sgt Riddle (Jimmy)
Sgt Arscott	Sgt Chigwell (Chig)

P/O Godfrey (Alan)	Sgt James (Jimmy)
Sgt O’Neill (Peggy)	Sgt Brice (Andy) — Sgt Clark (Nobby) ⁶
Sgt Wainhouse (Jack)	Sgt Waring (Pongo)

P/O Pickersgill (Pickers)**	P/O Jerdien (Airdale)**
Sgt Taylor (Harry)	Sgt Barber (Jimmy)
Sgt Hallett (Titch)	Sgt Taylor (Tubby)

Sgt Bennett
Sgt Tunstall
Sgt Francis

** This crew was in C not B Flight. ** These crews were in B Flight not C Flight. *** Denny or Trenny.*

Four

Note

Crew is shown as:

Pilot

Nav/Bomb aimer (Observer)

Radio Op. Rear Gunner

^{1, 2} etc indicate movement from one crew to another.

S/Ldr Nedwill a few days after joining ploughed a Gladiator into the airfield from about 6,000 ft.

The last Squadron raid (against Kosani airdrome) in Greece was a single aircraft on night of 19/20 April (the only serviceable aircraft remaining); Sgt Marshall, Sgt Clark, Sgt Baird.

The Luftwaffe followed us in to Menidi at 6:30 am just after we had landed; result in loss of all aircraft on ground including a Vickers Virginia transport [sic: a Valentia, see comments 20 April]; AND in the evacuation of all Squadron aircrew to Corfu [sic: Crete, see comments 21 April] (and on to Alexandria) next day (21/4).

7 December 1940	P/O Pickersgill (Pickers)
Valona	Harry Taylor
	Tich Hallett
	P/O Jerdien (Airdale)
	Jimmy Barber
	Tubby Taylor
31 Dec	Sgt Bennett
Valona	Sgt Tunstall
	Sgt Frances
1 Jan 41	F/Lt Barratt
Car accident	
6 Jan	F/O Delaney (Duke)
Valona	Vic Pollard
	Jock McCord
	P/O Campbell (Bobby) }
	John Beharrel } POW
	Sgt Appleyard }

13 April	S/Ldr Irvine	F/O Herbert (Herby)
Easter Sunday	P/O Davis (Gerry)	* W/Cdr Coote (“Having a look”)
Monastir Gap	P/O Geary (Arthur)	Jock Young**
	F/Lt Godfrey (Alan)	F/Lt Buchanan (Buck)
	Peggy O’Neill	*S/Ldr Cryer (“Having a look”)
	Jack Wainhouse	Geordie Patterson
	F/O Thomson (Tommy)	Sgt James (Jimmy)
	P/O Hogarth	Andy Brice
	Sgt Arscott	Pongo Waring

*Thus Paddy Cavanagh and Jimmy Dunnett were “saved”.
 ** (*Dougy*)

31 May	Sgt Davis (Doug)
Aleppo airdrome	Sgt Stalder
(French)	?

Operations in Greece

Air War For Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete 1940-41, C F Shores

To dot a few “i”s and cross a few “t”s:

Page 43:

F/O Farrington was in fact F/O Farrington &
F/Lt Doudney was ‘B’ Flight Commander, not ‘C’ Flight &
F/Lt Jones was ‘C’ Flight Commander not ‘B’ Flight.

Perhaps Smithy (Bevington-Smith) had a memory lapse. Seem to recollect he did not return to the Squadron after his accident on the raid of 22/1/41. After that time the crew was P/O Cox, Sgt Martin (Jerry), Sgt Hughes.

Page 65:

F/Lt Doudney & F/Lt Farrington were posted to Egypt after that event; F/Lt Buchanan and F/O Herbert took over as Flight Commanders.

Fighters over the Desert:

p15

“Desert strewn with landing grounds...more permanent prewar airfields...El Adem...Helwan”. Helwan was outside Cairo!

p19

Sq Ldr Bax [KIA, 2 September 1940] was succeeded by Sq Ldr Gordon-Finlayson. No wonder I was able to get leave very shortly after joining the Sqdn.

But to start at the beginning:

‘A’ FLIGHT

27/9/40 L1487 Sgt Peck, Sgt Clark, Sgt Martin (Ace)
[Sgt Peck not in aircrew list] — *was not then in Sqdn*
El Dabaa — Giarabub (M.T. Park)
raid — SSB (2x250, 2x20lb containers)

See page 65 re L1487

[The Western Desert air campaign is discussed in great detail in *Air Historical Branch RAF – Narrative – Middle East Campaigns – Vol I – Operations in Libya and The Western Desert September 1939 to June 1941*.

Pages 9-64 indicate the intensity of activity undertaken from May to September 1940. After the loss of a Blenheim shooting-up ground targets on 5 July, ACM Longmore signalled AC Collishaw “...such operations unjustified, having regard to our limited resources of which you are well aware” (also noted in *RAF 1939-1945 Vol I*)

Pages 66-70 discuss the Greek campaign and scarcity of resources to support it.]

7/11/40 L1481 Sgt Marshall, Sgt Clark, Sgt Baird
El Dabaa — Ismalia

211 — “The Greyhounds of the Desert” — moving base

page 41

23/11 L1481 Sgt Marshall et al
Ismalia — Fuka — Tatoi (Menidi) with 4x250 fused

During this time the “mobile squadron” was getting all its gear down from the Western Desert to Ismalia by truck. In the last few days there was much argument (discussion?) about bomb load and camouflage (the aircraft had desert paint not European paint), the latter was easily solved, we went as we were. Bomb load was another matter entirely, after “bombing-up” three times & taking them down (we dropped them the third time — well, the sand was soft!) the order was to carry a full load 4x250 — so up they went again.*

* *n.b. This load, unload carried out by “the crew”.*

[The speed of this move and the subsequent, almost immediate offensive mission from Tatoi (Menidi) has been remarked upon in various sources. Despite pressure from General Papagos and others for close support of the Greek Army in Albania, W/Cdr D’Albiac determined upon attacking strategic, rear targets; partly in order to conserve the slender force at his disposal. See D’Albiac, *Report on Air Operations in Greece*, opening paras. This policy continued until February, when the Western Wing was formed and 211 Sqdn moved to Paramythia.]

page 42

24/11 L1481 Sgt Marshall
Menidi — Larissa (refuel) — Durazzo
raid — 4x250

F/O Dundas, Sgt Page, Sgt Jones hydraulics shot away (port engine controls hydraulics — turret, flaps, undercart) made a belly landing at Menidi.

F/Lt Doudney, Sgt Cavanagh, Sgt Wright had a few holes.

S/Ldr Gordon-Finlayson, P/O Davis, P/O Geary “as the book”.

Sgt Marshall & Co pursued; by evasive action & finally at ground level “Jock” got us out of it — with “Haggis” letting fly with the VGO & “Nobby” letting off Very lights; made Larissa, badly shot up, with the port engine in serious trouble — leave L1481 at Larissa, return to Menidi in a Greek Ju52 on 25/11.

n.b. Three flights (Squadron) not 3 aircraft.

page 49

4/12 L6634 Sgt Marshall
Tepelene
raid — SSB

Eight

page 50

7/12

“as the book” but F/Lt Jones was ‘C’ Flight Commander, also:
F/O Pickersgill, Sgt Barber, Sgt Taylor (Tubby) &
P/O Jerdien, Sgt Taylor (Harry), Sgt Hallett were both ‘B’ Flight crews

page 51-52

9/12

L1481

Sgt Marshall
Valona
raid — 4x250 — T/B (turn back)

We get caught in a violent storm — ‘B’ Flight No 3 roll right over.

[See D’Albiac para 14. “Based as they were in the Athens area, every raid carried out by the bomber squadrons involved a preliminary flight of at least 200 miles...in weather conditions which were at times quite indescribable”.

Despite the urgings of Greek commanders for close air support during this period, the Greek Government remained determined not to provoke the Germans, limiting RAF bases to those in the Athens area. In any event, the winter state of potential forward airfields and access to them was very poor.]

9/12

L1481

Sgt Marshall
Valona
raid — 4x250

Get out under cloud through a valley to the sea & encounter a single C ant floatplane — “Jock” gave chase firing away and took us right under it so “Haggis” was also able to have “a go”.

‘C’ FLIGHT

page 58-59

24/12

L8533

Sgt James, Sgt Clark, Sgt Waring
Valona
raid — 4x2 50
 (“as the book” but [book has] wrong date!!)

page 59

26/12

L8533

Sgt James & Co
Krionero
raid — 4x250

We get badly shot-up, tail & fuselage full of holes. So the 5 Cr42s were right in their claim but wrong about the outcome.
“So! No-one flying?”

page 62

31/12

“as the book”
Sgt Bennett, Sgt Tunstall, Sgt Frances of ‘C’ Flight
(a Sqdn raid they were the most vulnerable at No 3 in ‘C’ Flight)

page 64

4/1/41 L8533 Sgt James
Larissa (refuel) — Elbasan
raid — 4x250

page 65-66

6/1 “as the book”

F/O Campbell, Sgt Beharrel, Sgt Appleyard
(had a sharp letter from John Beharrel (POW) telling us to see that
dinghies in aircraft are checked — theirs failed to inflate!)

F/O Delaney, Sgt Pollard, Sgt McCord.
Both ‘B’ Flight crews.

page 67 or 68

10/1 L8533 Sgt James
Berat
(retreating Italians) — T/B — terrible weather

19/1 L8533 Sgt James
Elbasan
raid — 4x250 — T/B

Wing ice causing aircraft to fall out of the sky — opt to stay with the
aircraft and take a chance (we beyond target & in enemy territory)
jettison bombs pans of ammo — it melt at 2500’ !!

page 70

22/1 L6647 Sgt James
Berat
offensive recco — SSB

We catch it hot, lots of holes — we are No 3 in ‘C’ Flight. At No 2,
F/O Godfrey, Sgt O’Neil [O’Neill], Sgt Wainhouse have a fire in the
cockpit — we stay alongside with them, just in case — when the
smoke clears, they wave OK! “as the book” Very light caught it!

‘A’ FLIGHT

(Sgt Brice rejoins Sgt James on return from sick leave)

page 75

5/2 L8478 P/O Hooper, Sgt Clark, Sgt Martin (Ace)
Kelcyre — Berat R oad
raid — SSB — T/B

— terrible weather, make four attempts, all frustrated.

Ten

Page 78 move to Paramythia was on 10/2 not 9/2
 10/2 L1481 Sgt Marshall} Menidi — Paramythia
 11/2 L1490 Sgt Marshall} Freight & Bomb load & ground crew passengers in “well”
 12/2 L1481 Sgt Marshall} on Squadron move to Paramythia

[*RAF 1938-1945 Vol 1* p285 notes “a dry patch of ground for a few Blenheims had been found near the front”.

Air War... notes that Paramythia was accessible only by air or by foot and mule. See also D’Albiac para 18, 20, “...for the first few days [sic!] this landing ground was provisioned by air”, and ACM Longmore signal to CAS “Lines of communication for petrol and bombs in this area unbelievable” (*RAF 1939-1945 Vol 1* p285).

D’Albiac (para 30) considered the Western Wing as comprising one Bomber Squadron (211 at Paramythia) and one Fighter Squadron (80 at Yannina, with the Air HQ). At Paramythia, detachments eg from 30 Sqdn (Blenheim Is), 84 Sqdn (Blenheim 1s), 80 Sqdn and 112 Sqdn (Gladiators and later, Hurricanes) arrived and departed as need dictated.]

page 82

13/2 L1542 Sgt Marshall
 Tepelene
 raid — 4x250

Lots of opposition both AA and fighters — escort not much help.
 “as the book” ‘B’ Flight.

13/2 L6634 Sgt Marshall} Paramythia — Menidi — Paramythia
 17/2 L8531 Sgt Marshall} Freight (including a “well” of beer & bomb load 4x250)

page 84

17/2 L8531 Sgt Marshall
 Tepelene
 raid — SSB

page 85

18/2 L8531 Sgt Marshall
 Kelcyra [Kelcyre] — Tepelene
 raid — SSB

page 86

20/2 L8531 Sgt Marshall
 Berat
 raid — 4x250

First Hurricane escort — lots of shot and shell & a few holes all round
 —“as the book”

[D’Albiac para 21 notes 4 Hurricane victories on this day]

page 88			
21/2	L8531	Sgt Marshall Bousi Road raid — SSB — T/B — cloud to ground	
page 89			
22/2	L8531	Sgt Marshall Bousi — Gualla Road raid — SSB	
page 91			
24/2	L8531	Sgt Marshall Tepelene raid — SSB	
26/2	L8531	Sgt Marshall Fiere (Italian HQ) raid — SSB	
page 92			
27/2		“as the book”	
page 97			
1/3	L8478	Sgt Marshall Bousi (troop concentration) raid — SSB	
1/3	L8531	Sgt Marshall Valona offensive recco — SSB — 4 exposures	
As we approached, across the bay, an Italian hospital ship was below us, right on our track, Sgt Dunnet [Dunnett] (P/O Herbert, Sgt Dunnet, Sgt Young — No 2 ‘A’ Flight) released one x 250 (it missed), he was “on the mat” when we returned and sent back to Athens for a week!! Punishment!			
2/3	L8531	Sgt Marshall Berat airfield offensive recco — SSB — 15 exposures	
page 99-100			
4/3		“as the book”	
page 103			
7/3	L8478	Sgt Marshall Tepelene Road raid — 4x250	

page 104			
8/3	L1496	Sgt Marshall	Tepelene Town raid — SSB
page 105			
9/3	L1496	Sgt Marshall	Bousi — Gualla Road raid — SSB
page 105			
12/3	L1496	Sgt Marshall	Bousi — Gualla Road raid — SSB
page 114			
15/3	L8478	Sgt Marshall DFM	Berat Airfield raid — SSB
page 114-116			“as the book” P/O Pearson (Twink) posted to Egypt after this.
page 116			
18/3	L8531	Sgt Marshall DFM	Bousi — Gualla Road raid — 4x250
19/3	L8478	Sgt Marshall DFM	Dukati raid — SSB — T/B — terrible weather
20/3	L8531	Sgt Marshall DFM	Yannina & Paramythia photo recco — 12 expos
page 118			
22/3	L1496	Sgt Marshall DFM	Evacuation to Menidi [temporarily] after the great “as the book” shoot-up in which “our” L8531 was set on fire and, with 4x250 on board, blows up.
page 120-123			
25/3	L1496	Sgt Marshall DFM	Menidi — Paramythia (with 4x250)

[The continuing difficulty of transport by road or sea to Paramythia meant the Squadron freighting their own bombs.]

page 123

30/3 L1496 Sgt Marshall DFM
Tepelene (S.W.) Area 1
Solo offensive recco — 25 exposures
Dukati
raid — 4x250

page 123

31/3 L1496 Sgt Marshall DFM
Himare (N.W.) Area 2
Solo offensive recco
22 exposures & 2x500 on the hairpin bends, not observed

had to dive, to get the bomb load to release when pulling out of the dive.

page 125

3/4 L1496 Sgt Marshall DFM
Berat
raid — 4x250

page 242

13/4 EASTER SUNDAY [Monastir Gap]

“as the book”

but did L8478 crash into mountain top in cloud?

L8478 S/Ldr Irvine, P/O Davis, P/O Geary
L4819 F/O Herbert, W/C Coote, Sgt Young
L8604 F/O Thompson DFC, P/O Hogarth, Sgt Arscott
L1434 F/Lt Buchanan DFC, S/Ldr Cryer DFC, Sgt Patterson
L8449 F/O Godfrey, Sgt O’Neil, Sgt Wainhouse
L1539 Sgt James, Sgt Brice, Sgt Waring

and the “lucky” ones — Sgt Dunnet (W/C Coote) and
Sgt Cavanagh (S/Ldr Cryer DFC)

page 247 [& page 148]

14/4 L8533 Sgt Marshall DFM
(*Paramythia*) — Menidi
escort — King Peter [of Yugoslavia] in an S79.

L8533 the only flyable aircraft available, had been shot up and had no turret, a piece of plywood covered the hole. Our outline was distinctly “odd” [ie for air recognition]. We had “quite a time” with 30 Sqdn — me firing colour of the day all over the sky [ie Very lights] but they not convinced — “Haggis” gets radio to Menidi to get them to warn them off, which they do as we cross the Corinth Canal. Then the S79 fails to follow us round the circuit — goes straight in against “the sock”, leaving us to flounder!

[*Short Sunderland in WW II* p38,39 speculates that F/Lt Lywood (N9029) evacuated the King from Kotor on 16/4. This is clearly wrong, and *Air War...* more or less correct. See also the note for 21/4 below]

page 246

15/4 L8533 Sgt Marshall DFM
Menidi— Agrinion
(freight) moving from Paramythia

15/4 L8533 Sgt Marshall DFM
Agrinion — Paramythia

15/4 L8533 Sgt Marshall DFM
Paramythia — Agrinion

aborted — not able to get out of the valley — port engine develops a mighty mag drop after take-off. “Jock” has a great struggle to get us back, turning on the starboard only. We have enough power in port engine for flaps & undercart — a very “shaky do”.

page 246-249

13/4-15/4 “the book” seems to confuse the dates somewhat.

At least 2 Dornier 17s landed at Paramythia on the 13th late in the afternoon (1700 or so), and one left for Eleusius [Eleusis] — our refuelling was very primitive. Do17s and Savoia 79s continued arriving on 14th and 15th, some left; but we were already destroying gear which had not been taken to Agrinion. Those with fuel moved to Agrinion or Eleusis. On the 15th the raids began with 109s & Macchi 200s and had a pretty “open go”. Many Yugoslav aircraft destroyed or badly shot-up. Trouble was we had no gear at Paramythia, it had all gone to Agrinion, so 44 gallon drums of 100 octane were no help — we had no pumps — the desert 4 gallon cans were not part of this exercise!

[D’Albiac para 42 notes the congestion at Paramythia, and successful withdrawal of the Western Wing

RAF 1938-1945 Vol 1 p298 states that 44 Yugoslav aircraft were put out of action at Paramythia as a result of the 15 April raid, and later, that 6 of their bombers, 3 civil and 10 seaplanes were successfully withdrawn to Egypt. Apart from 40 S79s and 60 Do17s, the Yugoslav airforce apparently had over 50 Blenheims on strength at the start of the campaign. It is not conceivable that any Yugoslav S79s or Do17s went either to Crete or to Egypt.]

page 252

15/4 “as the book” — F/O Godfrey & Sgt James [the survivors of Easter Sunday]

page 246 & 257

15/4 “the book” say 211 had 5 Blenheims — what did they include?
L8533 no doubt! and L1486! [see below]

- 16/4 L1486 Sgt Marshall DFM
Paramythia — Agrinion
- The aircraft was damaged but “flyable”. We (“Jock”, “Nobby” and “Haggis”) had a night out in the village of Paramythia, at the taverna the natives kept the brandy flowing and we found beds for the night with the doctor! (the night of 15/4-16/4)
n.b. L8533 left at Paramythia — thus our “night out”
- 16/4 L8501 Sgt Marshall DFM
Agrinion — Eleusius — Menidi
escort for one S79 to Eleusius
- (once again 30 Squadron gave us a hard time — “colour of the day” worked this time)
- page 258
16/4 “as the book”
- we had just landed in L8501 when that poor guy in the Yugoslav Do 17 tried to get down — every idiot on the ground seemed to be firing at him — & it quite clearly had Yugoslav markings.
n.b. it do not circle for half an hour!!
- page 260 “as the book” but unaware that we were under 11 Squadron control.
n.b. we now had two serviceable aircraft.
- page 265
20/4 L8501 Sgt Marshall DFM
Kosani airfield
Solo night raid — 4x250
- On landing back at Menidi (6:40) we discovered it was a FIRST for all of us!! We found we had been followed back by Me109s. Halfway between aircraft and the operations building the fun began. There were 109s everywhere — we ran like hell “they” were for aircraft, however, not 3 little airmen — and they sure gave the place a going over. First floor of HQ was a marvellous grandstand.
- [*Diary of a Disaster...* p229, incorrectly claims that the RAF ceased operations on 16 April. *Air War...* p265 cites 15 individual (solo) Blenheim sorties on the night of 20 April, a remarkable number of aircraft in the circumstances, but according to *RAF 1939-1945 Vol 1*, shortly after this there were 15 Blenheims available in Crete.]
- page 273-276 “the book” is somewhat confused — and no wonder — this all happened on 20/4 — 211 had no serviceable aircraft after the 109s & 110s had another “go” later — they even “killed” the poor old Valentia [transport aircraft, see *Aircrew in Greece, Note p5*] sitting out on the airfield fence.

“as the book” well; until 11am that was so; after who knows!

[According to *Diary of a Disaster*, p228, “all papers were destroyed by fire”, citing AIR24/1666, see source note 259. Likewise, *Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943* p82 notes that “some of the operational records are palpably reconstructions...the originals being lost or deliberately destroyed during the withdrawal”.

A search of the UK PRO shows that in class AIR27, the Operational Record Book for 211 Squadron survives for the whole period September 1940–July 1941.]

N9029 F/Lt Lywood [Short S.25 Sunderland, 230 Sqdn]
Scaramanga — Suda Bay

10am told to assemble with “gear” (the bit you’d had managed to keep together) at 11.00hrs (all 211 aircrew). A 5-tonner took us all down through Athens to Scaramanga — much to our surprise. Packed onto a tender and taken out to the Sunderland.

[F/Lt Lywood in N9029 had evacuated King Peter of Yugoslavia via the same route on 18 April. *Short Sunderland...* p39 shows the young King, in tweeds, aboard a lighter with RAF personnel. Lywood was also responsible for the evacuation of the Greek Royal Family, and W/Cdr D’Albiac and his wife]

N9029 F/Lt Lywood
Suda Bay — Alexandria

We spent the night 21-22 in the olive groves under the stars — after visiting the town! From Alexandria we are transported to RAF Ramleh [Palestine] (first Jaffa oranges — FIRST BEDBUGS!) YUCK

Operations in Palestine

15/5	L4910	<p>Sgt Marshall DFM Aquir [Aqir] — Ryak — Damascus (pamphlet drops) Palmyra airfield raid — 4x250</p> <p><i>Dust Clouds p184 Thurs 15 May "At Aqir 211...took over four Blenheim IVs". L4910 flew that route (a Mk I) on that day, pamphlet drop, at least 3 a/c.</i></p>
16/5	L4910	<p>Sgt Marshall DFM Aquir — Nicosia — Aquir escort — navigator for flight of Hurricanes* * Tomahawks (2)</p> <p><i>Dust Clouds p186 16 May last line...L4910 again</i></p>
<i>17/5 S/Ldr Blomfield now CO 211 Sqdn</i>		
26/5	V5911	<p>Sgt Marshall DFM Aquir — Palmyra raid — 4x250</p> <p>At last we have a MkIV</p> <p><i>Dust Clouds p193 Yes, we in V5911</i></p>
30/5	V5585	<p>Sgt Marshall DFM Lattaquie — Beyrouth airfield — Beyrouth solo photo recco — 28 exposures</p>
31/5	V5585	<p>Sgt Marshall DFM Aquir — Aleppo airfield raid — 2x250 + 2 containers 25 lb incendiaries</p> <p>Sgt Davis*, Sgt Stalder, Sgt Trenny shot down by fighters over Syria — all killed</p> <p><i>*"the book" say 28th for a David!! Also refer to P/O Hooper on this 31/5. Dust Clouds, p193 Wed 28 last 2 lines: Do not understand this, my log for 31/5 say Sgt Davis shot down on this Aleppo raid, not 28/5.</i></p> <p><i>Dust Clouds p195 31 May "Another Blenheim..." we carried out raid</i></p>

Wadi Gazouza and 72 OTU

1/6-4/6 11 Squadron

4/6		211 Squadron reformed and posted to the Sudan (Wadi Gazouza) to form 72 OTU in the main for Australian aircrew training.	
5/6	L8443	S/Ldr Blomfield	}
		Aquir — Heliopolis	}
			} Re-equip with stores and Mk Is again!
11/6	L8390	F/Lt Dundas	}
		Heliopolis — Ismalia	}
26/6	L1097	Sgt Watkins	
		Ismalia — Wadi Halfa	
27/6	L1097	Sgt Watkins	
		Wadi Halfa — Wadi Gazouza	

n.b. July '41 W/C Macdonald now CO 2 11 Sqdn

[July 1941–January 1942: 72 OTU operations, exercises, search and rescue : recorded in the author’s Log Book but not included in his summary. The formation and operations of 72 OTU are discussed in some detail in *Air Historical Branch RAF – Narrative – Middle East Campaigns – Vol II: Operations in Libya and The Western Desert June 1941 to January 1942* (AWM 220 Item 16; UK PRO AIR41/28). See pages 46-56, and Appendix K, Appendix N. In June 1941, 211 Sqdn is noted as a “reserve squadron” tasked with forming 72 OTU, and including on strength 6 Blenheim Is.

The Australian War Memorial also holds the private papers of Sgt M. K. (Bill) Burnside, who was posted to 2 11 Sqdn on 6 July 1941, starting his OTU Navigator/Bomb-aimer course on 15 July 1941. PR00491 includes his Logbook, personal diary, navigation course notes, a photograph album and a large quantity of loose photographs. Five of these are available digitally in the AWM Picture collection, P02127.009 to P021127.013, including the aftermath of the great storm at Wadi Gazouza, also photographed by the author (see page 30).

Sgt Burnside’s Log book for the period August to October is signed by F/L C. W. Thomas as OC B Flight 211 Sqdn, F/L K. C. Dundas as OC Night Flying 211 Sqdn, and W/C Macdonald as CO 211 Sqdn. Sgt Burnside, crewed with Perce Payne and Charger Cameron, completed his course on 11 November. On that date, W/C Macdonald signed his Logbook entry as CI, 72 OTU!

Among the Blenheim Is in which Sgt Burnside flew were L1520, L6655, L1533, L6663, L8539, L1492, L1482 and L8517, including a ferry flight from Khartoum to Wadi Gazouza 30/8, as Navigator to Sgt Jock Marshall DFM in L6655. Some Mark IVs were also available.]

3/1/42		<p>211 Squadron released from 72 OTU: Summit — Wadi Halfa by train Wadi Halfa — Aswan by paddle steamer Aswan — Helwan</p> <p>by train — here being re-equipped with MkIV Blenheims — transport (all types) — stores & equipment — “jabs” including Yellow Fever — on posting to Singapore.</p>
10/1	V7892	<p>Sgt Marshall DFM Helwan — Aboukir pilot passengers to collect 3 Mk IVs</p>
10/1	V7892	<p>Sgt Marshall Aboukir — Helwan</p>
14/1/42		<p>Sgt Marshall, Sgt Clark, Sgt Baird posted to MEP</p> <p>(Middle East Pool) hopefully on way back home. MEP was at Suez.</p>
25/1/42		<p>Sgt Clark posted to Air HQ Cairo for “movement” to Air Defence HQ, Pretoria.</p> <p>We have a lot to say about this — quite an argument with MEP staff — splitting a crew and so on — all to no avail: Sgt Clark is POSTED! Here is your travel warrant — get going!</p>
26/1		<p>Air HQ Cairo</p> <p>Here discovered (1) 72 OTU had made a very strong attempt to persuade Air HQ to cancel the posting to 211 Squadron and retain Sgt Clark at 72 OTU. (2) Was to travel as a civilian (slacks & shirt provided, with passport) to Durban to take post as Air Navigation Instructor at 42 Air School Queenstown.</p>
5/2	G AD-UW	<p>Captain Mountain — Empire Flying Boat “Castor” Cairo — Wadi Halfa — Khartoum</p>
6/2		<p>Khartoum — Malakal — Juba — Port Bell — Kisumu</p>
7/2		<p>Kisumu — Momabasa — Dar-es-salam — Lindi — Mozambique</p>
8/2		<p>Mozambique — Beira — Lorenzo Marques — Durban</p>

Afterthoughts

1. How come much of the detail is of 30 & 33 Squadrons — and Swordfish visits in great detail. Is it because they had a more stable base and were able to keep and transfer records. 211 Squadron after 13 March, when S/Ldr Gordon-Finlayson was posted, had in succession on about 23/3 S/Ldr Nedwill DFC on 26/3 F/Lt Jones DFC “Potato” (acting CO) in early April S/Ldr Irvine until 13/4 then? Who knows after that? After the April debacle — it seems documents were destroyed at Paramythia.
2. How much of the information is hearsay, recollection, or recorded fact? That for 84 & 211 Squadron seems pretty thin on the ground (and in the air).
3. How did Paramythia accommodate all the units nominated as based there, ground crew, aircrew, aircraft; 211 occupied all the available space. Occasional visits by 3-9 aircraft from 84, 30, 33, 70 and a couple of Swordfish of 815 had to fit in as best they could & seldom if ever stayed overnight — see page 184, “Order of battle” (and that is incorrect 112 not there)[ie 112 Sdqn was not based at Paramythia, although the OOB suggests this].
4. How come no mention is made of the lack of prime armament (bombs) at Paramythia; operational sorties were, at times, rationed for this reason. Aircraft flew to Menidi to pick up bombs!!
5. How did 40 odd Yugoslav aircraft park at Paramythia? on top of each other!!
6. The events of 20/4-21/4 were chaotic: seems that as 211 had NO aircraft left on 21/4 they were shunted out of it — to save aircrew?
7. How did L1481 survive to be flown by 11 Squadron after 21/4? see page 276.

[The compiler has added notes which relate to these questions at appropriate points in the text, from the various published sources. These recognise the difficulties of the campaign and are in general agreement with each other, but do not resolve all the puzzles, and occasionally add to them. The quotations are therefore sensibly selective.

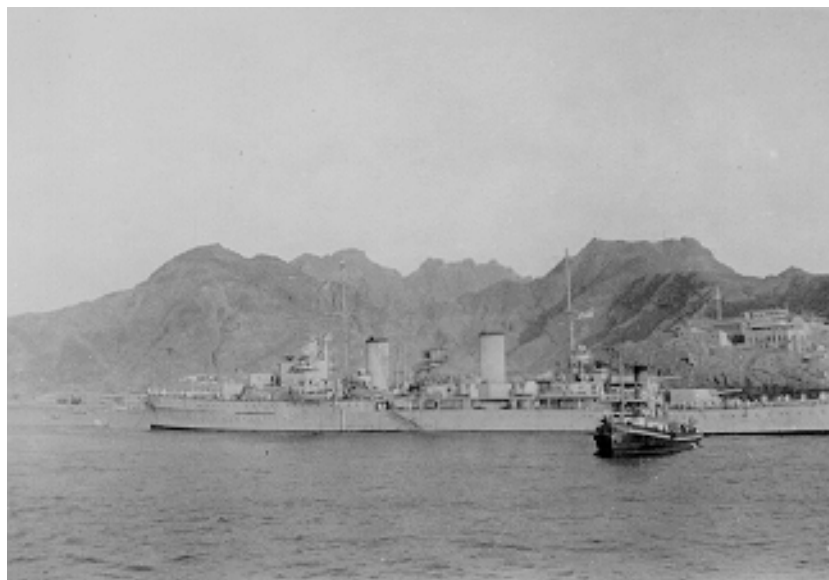
For any sort of comparison in detail, primary sources are indispensable. When they come into the compiler's possession, *Air Historical Branch RAF – Narrative – Middle East Campaigns Volume VI – Operations in Greece* (unfortunately never part of AWM 220, but present in UK PRO AIR41/28) and 211 Sqn Operational Record Book (UK PRO AIR27) may shed further light on how some of these puzzles came about.

Photographs

Selected photographs from the collection of the author, either taken by him or the common property of the Squadron. Captions, print numbers and negative numbers by the author, with additional notes by the compiler [thus].



[Sgt C.F.R. "Nobby" Clark & Miss Betty Ruth Hawkins 1940]



Our escort at anchor (Aden) (312 18-3)



The village street (Abu Sueir)
Note Truck, horse, and camel (323 20-3)



Dabaa "Olly" & Henry Taylor
All mod con (325 22-12)



Our "home" and washing arrangements at Dabaa, Quotafia (324 22-1)



"A" Flight at Dabaa (22-4)



[L-R: Sgts Cotton, Clark, Oliver, Barber;
Sgt Taylor kneeling - Dabaa]



Shooting up the Ops Room [Dabaa]



Shooting up the Sgt's Mess after a raid [Dabaa]



"A" Flight again (22-5) [Dabaa]



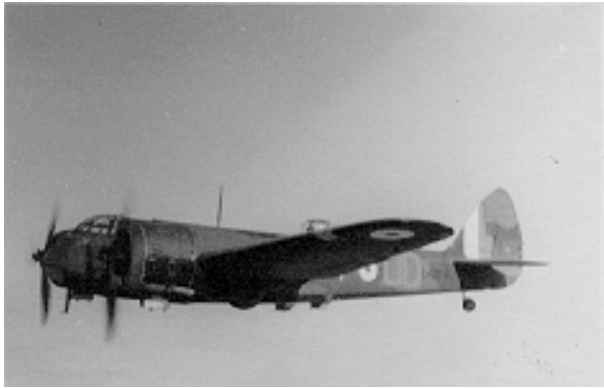
The Flight Office and aircrew tent (22-3) [Dabaa]



Battleship in sights (36-4) [Alexandria]



Over the stern (36-5) [Alexandria]



Blenheim "close-up"
Note light series carriers (37-4) [L4865?]



Blenheim over Alex harbour (36-3)



Blenheim
Note gunner in turret (37-3)



Convoy on the way to Ismailia from Dabaa (36-2) *Halfway House?*



Flight line up (24-1)
[211 Sq prewar code LJ, L1490, L1488(?), LSCs, engine & cockpit covers... luxury!]



["Somewhere in Greece" - possibly Peggy O'Neil , & the author]



"A" Flight leaves for Valona (356) [Menidi]



Paramythia
From the Camp looking East (363)



Paramythia
Haggis reclining gracefully (367)



Geordie Hughes and Haggis
In "our" tent at Paramythia (364)



A peaceful morning [Paramythia] Len (Page),
Doug (Young), [Author], Geordie (Hughes)



8531 burning
Our kite in "A" Flight at
Paramythia



8531 explodes



8531 the smoke clears



8531 all that's left



[Sgt Clark, Wadi Gazouza]



“The rains came” Wadi Gazouza (401)



Towards the MT Wadi Gazouza (403)



Christmas '42
John Mullen, me, Tommy Thomas, Taff Kirk
[South Africa, 42 Air School Queenstown]



[Sgt Clark, 42 AS South Africa]



[F/O C.F.R. Clark and Mrs Clark 1945]

Bibliography

In the author's collection

Wings Over Olympus T H Wisdom (George Allen & Unwin 1942)
RAF Observer's Log Book (Form 542)

In the compiler's collection

Report on Air Operations in Greece 1940-41 W/Cdr J H D'Albiac
(London Gazette Supplement, Jan 1947) (photocopy)
Bristol Blenheim C Bowyer (Ian Allen 1984)
Middle East 1940-42 A study in air power P Guedalla (Hodder & Stoughton 1944)
Short Sunderland in WWII A Hendrie (Airlife Publishing 1994)
Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943 J Herington (Australian War Memorial 1954) (photocopy extract)
Diary of A Distaster: British Aid to Greece 1940-41 R D S Higham (Kentucky UP 1986) (photocopy extract)
Greece, Crete and Syria G Long (Australian War Memorial & Collins 1986)
The Bristol Blenheim I: Profile Publications No 93 (Profile Press 1966)
Bomber Squadrons of the RAF & Their Aircraft P J R Moyes (McDonald & Jane's 1976)
Royal Air Force 1939-1945 Vol I The Fight at Odds D Richards (HMSO 1974) (photocopy extract)
Air War for Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete 1940-41 C Shores B Cull & N Malizia (Grubb Street 1987)
Dust Clouds in the Middle East C Shores (Grubb Street, 1994)
Fighters over the Desert C Shores & H Ring (photocopy extract)
Wings Over Olympus T H Wisdom (George Allen & Unwin 1942)
RAF Squadrons C G Jefford (Airlife) (photocopy extract)
The Source Book of the RAF K Delve (Airlife) (photocopy extract)
Air Historical Branch RAF – Narrative – Middle East Campaigns – Vol I: Operations in Libya and The Western Desert September 1939 to June 1941
First Draft, G.169803/DP/7/48 Copy No 14 (AWM 220 Item 15) (photocopy extract)
Air Historical Branch RAF – Narrative – Middle East Campaigns – Vol II: Operations in Libya and The Western Desert June 1941 to January 1942
First Draft, G.169794/TC/7/48 Copy No 21 (AWM 220 Item 16) (photocopy extract)
AWM Private Records Collection PR00491 (donor J Burnside) (selected photographs)
AWM Photographs Collection PR02127.009 to PR02127.009 digitised photographs from AWM PR00491

Other references

Illustrated London News Jul-Dec 1940, Jan-Jun 1941, Jul-Dec 1941 (NLA)
History of the Second World War: The Mediterranean & Middle East I S O Playfair (HMSO 1954)
The Campaign in Greece and Crete Ministry of Information (HMSO 1942)
Greece against the Axis S Casson (1942)
Greece the Struggle for Freedom S Zotos (1967)
Greece, Crete and Syria J Laffin (1989)
North Africa 1940-1942 P Badman (1988)
Greece and Crete 1941 C Buckley (1977)
Battle of Greece 1940-1941 A Papagos (1949)
Pictorial History of the Mediterranean War Vol 1 to 3 C F Shores
Greece 1940-1941 C Cruickshank (1976)
The Desert Air Force R Owen (1948)
AWM Film Collection F01083: Greece, Luftwaffe air raid on Elasson 15 April 1941