

# 1943 CALENDAR

- **January 2nd/7th 1943:** Squadron at Shallufa, bombed targets on German occupied Crete (Greece): Candia and Heraklion
- **January 17th:** Large section of Squadron to Malta: 12 aircrews & 32 ground-staff, joining the vital ops to prevent the reinforcement of Axis armies in Tunisia
- **February:** 630 operational Squadron hours flown (similarly in March) mostly at night in search of enemy shipping/convoys to torpedo strike
- **March 13th/20th:** convoys sighted and attacked with torpedoes – flying at 50 feet above the sea to also avoid enemy fighter attack; The Squadron section remaining at Shallufa continued bombing ops with targets on Crete (including mine laying). Then on the **23rd** : they moved to Amiriya, Egypt
- **April:** the casualty rate was high in the first 4 months of the year but some crews survived and were taken prisoner. Many operational hours during this time were also given to escorting British convoys, known by code names such as 'Victor', 'Heavy', 'Novel'. CO W/Cdr Johnson became tour expired. The new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Bruce McKenzie from the South African Air Force commenced
- **Anzac Day:** Commemorated in Malta by a service at the War Memorial, Floriana. Convoy escort ops 'Jumbo' and 'Pewitt'
- **May 6,8/9th:** From Malta, Wellingtons bombed an enemy seaplane base and railway at Marsala, Sicily and an enemy aerodrome at Gela
- **May 15th:** From Malta the Squadron moved to Blida, Algeria, part of Coastal Command; **May 17th:** Short detachment to Oran, Algeria
- **May 21st:** From Amiriya the Squadron moved to Protville (Tunisia) westwards via its own truck transport through war torn Egypt e.g. El Alamein, Libya & Tunisia (arriving 2nd wk of June). See the map below for the route, roughly adjacent to the coastline of North Africa
- **June:** the Squadron section from Malta/Blida re-joined the Squadron at Protville. Anti-shipping patrols in the Tyrrhenian Sea and off Corsica increased intensity. In 35 days from the 18th, 174 sorties were flown with 7 enemy ships confirmed sunk; sadly by end of August, seven aircrews lost.
- **July/August:** the Allied invasion of Sicily (9/7 to 17/8). Squadron torpedo attacks on enemy shipping continued. One Wellington probably hit by flak and ditching had 2 aircrew taken prisoner, but they escaped and returned to Allied lines. During August four to five aircraft flew ops on most nights.
- **September:** Italy surrenders (on the 8th). Bombing ops on Corsica (retreating Germans), U-boat hunts north of Sicily, anti-shipping ops, air-sea rescue ops
- **October:** bombing ops on Corsica; multiple U-boat ops including to Borizzo, Sicily (on the 8th). Letters from home arrived regularly, a morale boost.
- **Oct 12th:** Squadron moved to Bone, Algeria. U-boat hunts intensified to protect Allied shipping; New CO W/Cdr Jack Dowling (the 22nd); 3 Squadron chaplains visited.
- **November:** Anti-sub ops including Convoy escorts for 'Taunton' 70 ships, 'Wasting' 75 ships, 'Horatius' 52 ships; "Top-secret" detachment to Grottaglie, Italy
- **December/Christmas 25th:** convoy escorts continued with another U-boat surrendering after "swamp" ops used. Patrols continued on Christmas day but so did festivities with liquid cheer and sporting matches including rugby and Australian rules football at Bone, Algeria



CO: Wing  
Commander  
J. Dowling



CO Bruce McKenzie's crew  
(L-R): Dick Boydell,  
George Powell,  
George Dunmore,  
Charlie Green,  
Peter Eastcott,  
Bruce McK

