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OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

R.A.F. Form 540

See instructions for use of this form in K.R. and A.O.I.,
para. 2349, and War Manual, Pt. II., chapter XX., and
notes in R.A.F. Pocket Book.

of (Unit or Formation) No. 54 Squadron.

No. of pages used for day.....

Place.	Date. 1940 July.	Time.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
Rochford.	1st.		The month opened very quietly and no operational flying was undertaken. Exercises and practice flying were the order of the day.	
Rochford.	2nd.	0600	For half an hour Red Section tried unsuccessfully to find a break in the weather that a reconnaissance over German occupied aerodromes might be accomplished.	
		0933	"A" Flight patrolled Canterbury for hour-enemy plots came no nearer than the French coast.	
		2009	Once again the Squadron (led by Squadron Leader Leathart) journeyed over the territory of our late ally. No abnormal activity was witnessed either at aerodromes, on the canals or on the roads. The Squadron formation on its return was a pleasant reminder of the high sense of air discipline present in the Squadron.	
Rochford.	3rd.	0745	Two aircraft were prevented by weather conditions from completing the early morning reconnaissance over France.	
		1100	X raid over Sheerness plotted one a/c investigated but there was no interception.	
		1325	Red Section investigated unidentified a/c but no interception was made.	
		1515	Contact with the enemy was renewed, this time over our own territory. For two hours nine of our aircraft patrolled Manston in a rain storm (and with a low cloud base) chasing Spitfires and Hurricanes and dodging bombs coming through the clouds with equal impartiality. A lone Do. 215 was attacked by Blue Section (F/Lt. Way, P.O. Gray Sgt. Norwell), this engagement was watched by Green Section (S/Ldr. Leathart) and it is considered that severe damage must have been sustained by the enemy aircraft.	
		2200	One aircraft patrolled Rochford in poor weather conditions for nearly an hour. Enemy raids were reported off the coast. No contact was made.	
	4th.	0420	For 45 minutes Blue Section patrolled Whitstable. Enemy raids were plotted off the French coast but they did not cross the Channel.	

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Place.	Date.	Time.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
Manston.	4th.	1200	One Flight left for Manston to operate as an advanced Section. During the afternoon and evenings the two Sections completed seven sorties. One Section was attacked by M.E. 109s. coming very suddenly from the cover of cloud disappearing immediately after the attack. One machine (P.O. Kemp) was badly damaged (although the pilot managed to land at Manston). F/O McMullen's machine also received a short burst of machine gun bullets but he was able to continue the patrol and himself attack either a D.O. or a M.E. 110 firing a short burst at 200yds. Our pilots were uninjured, and all aircraft returned by 2149 hrs.	
Rochford.		1434	One aircraft investigated a suspicious aircraft circling the aerodrome at high altitude. This aircraft proved to be a Blenheim.	
Rochford.	5th.	0615	Two aircraft on patrol over German occupied aerodromes reached St. Omer, from whence they had to return owing to bad weather.	
		0930	Three Sections were ordered to patrol Canterbury as enemy raids were leaving the French coast and heading towards Dover. Our machines had scarcely become airborne when the raids turned back over France and so they were recalled.	
		1215	Red Section patrolled base for twenty minutes without any incident.	
		1615	One aircraft patrolled base for ten minutes.	
	6th.		An extremely quiet day, there was only one operational patrol lasting ten minutes (2005) when one aircraft headed for Chatham to intercept a plane which was identified as friendly.	
Manston.	7th.	0930	A second and most disastrous day at Manston. "B" Flight lost three machines, two being complete "write-off". Green Section were attacked by a number of H. E. 112s. whilst themselves attacking an H.e. 111. P.O. Campbell and P.O. Coleman were both shot down, but managed to make forced landings near Deal. The pilots suffered from minor injuries but the machines were completely wrecked. F/O McMullen, the leader was also damaged but managed to land at Manston. The H.e. 111 disappeared unscathed. The fundamental	

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Place.	Date. 1940	Time.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
Manston.	7th.	0930	lesson of "looking everywhere in the sky at once" has been learned at a very high price.	
		1835	Later in the day P.O. Gribble fired a few rounds at a M.E. 109 without effect and was himself fired upon by a Hurricane. Eleven sorties were made by the two sections in nine hours during the day.	
		2100	All pilots were called to readiness and within half an hour six machines were manned by pilots recalled from 24 hours pass. During the day the station was visited by Wing Commander Bouchier, Officer Commanding R.A.F. Station, Hornchurch, also S/Ldr. Ovendon.	
Rochford,	8th.	1017	An hours patrol by Blue Section without any encounters. Air to Ground firing occupied most of the afternoon, twelve pilots participated. P.O. Finnie and P.O. Howes were posted to the Squadron.	
		1930	The balance was slightly redressed in our favour when Blue Section (during a three section patrol over Dover) intercepted and shot down two M.E. 109s. off the coast between Deal and Dover. F/Lt. Way accounted one (pilot baled out) and shared the other with P.O. Garton.	
Rochford.	9th.	0930	During the morning the Squadron provided escort for a convoy off the S.E. Coast.	
		1337	There are no untoward incidents to be recorded.	
		1634	The Squadron (9 aircraft) patrolled DEAL area for an hour without incident.	
		1852	"A" Flight (including F/Lt Deere and P/O. Allen) each leading a section - increased the Squadron's number of enemy casualties to the extent of 1 HE59 confirmed (by P/O. Allen) contd.	

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Place.	Date.	Time.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
Rochford.	9th	1852	two ME109's confirmed by (F/Lt Deere and Sgt. Laurence) two ME109's unconfirmed by the same two pilots. The HE59, from which three prisoners were taken, was stranded on the GOODWINS and is the first of its type to be claimed by this Sqdn. F/Lt. Deere had an amazing experience that in manouvring for position for attack on a ME109, neither 109 nor Spitfire gave way - and a head on collision resulted, the ME catching the propellor and hood of the Spitfire. F/Lt. Deere (with engine stopped) managed to force land near MANSTON, upon which his machine caught fire. He broke his way out of the machine uninjured except for slight burns on the hands. The success of the patrol was marred by the loss of P/O. Garton (crashed near Manston) and P/O. Evershed (Missing).	
	10th	0037	As a result of the first phase of the Battle for Britain, the Squadron could only muster eight aircraft and 13 pilots.	
		0555	The above mentioned 8 aircraft patrolled MANSTON, but no enemy aircraft were seen.	
		0814	Four aircraft of "A" Flight patrolled CANTERBURY for Raid 59, but no interception took place.	
		1455	Eight aircraft left for MANSTON where five sorties were undertaken during a stay of 6 hours. The Downs were a haven of rest today.	
	11th	1318	Memories of the distant past were awakened this afternoon when 8 A/c were ordered on a convoy patrol. There is one big difference however, between the present and the past, then excitement was the exception, now it is common place. Unfortunately our aircraft were unable to discover any enemy aircraft.	
		2207	For three quarters of an hour Squadron Leader Leathart patrolled ROCHFORD searching for an elusive German Bomber. Although plotted near to the raider, searchlights did not illuminate and no interception was made.	
	12th	0834	The squadron strengthened now to 10 A/c patrolled a convoy off the estuary. A NIL Return was rendered.	

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Rochford.	July.			
	13th	1410	The whole squadron and later separate sections were on convoy patrol for nearly Four Hours.	
		1714	New Zealand to the fore again! - This time in the person of P/O Gray. Three sections were patrolling Manston when seasoned Blue Section (F/Lt. Way, P/O. Gray and Sgt. Norwell - all survivors of Dunkirk) were sighted by two ME. 109's. Better prepared than the earlier and less fortunate green section of the Squadron, the tables were turned on the 109's, chasing them back at sea level almost to the French Coast. P/O. Gray shot down one which crashed into the sea (confirmed by 56 Squadron). F/Lt. Way was unfortunate for the 109 he was chasing escaped. The Squadron score now stands at:- (a) e/a certain casualties. 39 (b) e/a probable casualties. 21 (c) our own pilots missing or killed 6 (d) our own a/c lost whilst engaging the enemy. 13 The Squadron is receiving a great deal of 'delayed action' publicity for the epic Calais-Marck. An article in "LIFE" (June 24th), " I fought in the sky over Dunkirk " by an R.A.F. Squadron Leader (S/L. Leathart) was followed by a commentary in the Daily Mirror and now Phillips and Powis display an extract of the account in a full page advertisement for 'Master' aircraft. 2100 The day's work was concluded with the squadron investigating an enemy air raid en route for Rochford. No results were obtained. Sgt. Davis and Sgt. Gibbins were posted to the Squadron.	
	14th	0845	Convoy patrols off the estuary were again the order of the day. 5 Sections patrolled	

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Rochford.	14th	0845	three convoys for a total period of five hours.	
	15th	0400	An early start was made on convoy patrols. By 0900 Hours six sections had been on patrol, but without a sight of the enemy. For the remainder of the day quietness prevailed at Rochford whilst rain fell continuously. P/O. Turley-George and Sgt. Collett joined the Squadron.	
Hornchurch		1530	The Squadron hangar was commissioned for an interesting function, when 65 Squadron was presented with 8 Spitfires by the East India Fund. The Under Secretary fo State for India (The Duke of Devonshire). The Under Secretary of State for Air (Captain Balfour). Sir Alexander Murray, and The Officer Commanding R.A.F. Station, Hornchurch (Wing Commander Bouchier) all spoke in generous terms of the work done by Fighter Pilots. The A.O.C. No. 11 Group (Air Vice-Marshal Park) was present. The good wishes of our friends both far and near, symbolised in this gift, are greatly appreciated. The more so as we are now left alone in the struggle against Nazi-dom.	
Rochford	16th		No operational flying during a further twenty-four hours of rain. A most interesting and enlightening report on "DUNKIRK" has been circulated ^{circularised} by H.Q. No. 11 Group. Great tribute is paid to the work of the Squadrons engaged from No. 11 Group. During the period of DUNKIRK 403 enemy casualties were confirmed, 203 unconfirmed for a loss of 143 of our own pilots. Our own Squadron accounted for 7.7% of the total enemy confirmed casualties. 7.9% of those unconfirmed. Our loss in pilots was 2.8% of the total. Local flying only for the training of new pilots during the early part of the day, a weather test over MANSTON and	
	17th	1908	Blue Section patrolling ROCHFORD for 50 minutes completed the day's operations except for a limited amount of dusk landings.	
Rochford.	18th	0445	Red Section patrolled MANSTON for 40 minutes without incident.	
		0546	"B" Flight investigated two enemy raids off Man-ston without result.	

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Rochford,	18th	0933	Both "A" and "B" Flights patrolled a convoy East of BURNHAM for an hour and 20 Mins.	
		1300	Informal photographs of the "Dunkirk Warriors" and of the whole Squadron with its many new faces were taken.	
		1700	The Squadron received a visit from Mr. Godfrey Winn ("Sunday Express") accompanied by S/Ldr. Ward (Press Liaison Officer) and F/Off. Cook (11 Group "Security"). A full page article in the Sunday Express (21.7.40.) on the "Fighter Pilot and His Type" followed. Many of the incidents quoted were recognised as Squadron anecdotes.	
		2300	For the first time during our stay at ROCHFORD the majority of the Squadron relaxed after release at a dance organised for the Squadron by the Doctors and Nurses of the Southern General Hospital. This gesture was greatly appreciated and full advantage taken of it.	
	19th	0930	Both flights were engaged in convoy patrols operating both from Rochford and Manston. for 7½ hours a standing patrol was maintained.	
		2205	The whole Squadron patrolled DOVER, on the return to Rochford "A" Flight investigated enemy activity, a fleeting glance of the exhaust of an enemy aircraft was obtained but the searchlights which could have pointed out direction failed to function and no interception was made. A stick of bombs was seen to fall across the Estuary from SHEERNESS to the Main Land. F/Off. Patrick Shallard (The Squadron's first intelligence Officer) relinquished his duties after a stay of 4 months with the Squadron. Flying Officer Smith succeeded him. F/Off. Blake (late "B" Flight Commander on special leave in South Africa) has now been posted to NAIROBI.	
	20th	0521	"B" Flight quickly followed by "A" Flight investigated a large enemy raid off the Estuary, no interceptions took place the The Squadron landed at Manston.	

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Rochford.	20th	0853	Whilst on patrol over Dover Squadron Leader LEATHART was able to get in a short burst at a D.O.17 before it disappeared in clouds.	
		1100	Two sorties by Blue Section "AA" Flight in Manston area and a Squadron patrol for an hour over DOVER completed Operational Flying for the day.	
	21st	0900	For four hours two convoys were patrolled by four sections in turn, no enemy activity was encountered. P/Off. KEMP was unfortunate for in the first patrol his engine cut and 15 miles east of CLACTON, he was forced to abandon his machine, but made a successful parachute landing near a destroyer, which took him aboard. (He returned to LONDON from ROSYTHE on the 23.7.40.)	
Rochford.	22nd.		During the day Sections were engaged seven times on convoy patrols, 1 Raids and enemy raids. No interceptions were made.	
	23rd.	0825 1120	Blue Section on convoy patrol for nearly two hours. The Squadron were ordered to Margate where enemy aircraft were reported to be bombing. A few bombs were seen to drop, but no contact was made with e/a. Sections patrolled convoys and investigated raids on five occasions during the rest of the day.	
	24th.	0812	The biggest and most successful day since Dunkirk. Two early patrols were followed by a third in which "B" Flight distinguished themselves. 12 D.O. 215s. in two waves of six attempted to bomb a convoy off Dover. The first six reached, but missed their target. A determined attack by Green Section under P.O. Gribble forced the e/a to jettison their bombs before reaching the target and to scurry home. No enemy casualties were claimed whilst none of our aircraft sustained damage. This is the first instance in which coils of trailing wire (probably 50ft. in length) have been thrown out by enemy bombers as our planes pursued them. Enemy cross fire was seen to be controlled, intensive and effective. "A" flight sent to re-inforce "B" Flight did not take part in the engagement.	
		1125	For over an hour the whole Squadron took part in the "Battle point of the Thames Estuary". 18 D.O.215's escorted by at least two Squadrons of ME109's and an unknown number of HE113's attacked a convoy in the Estuary. In this their largest biggest fight since the second day of DUNKIRK and in the face of these considerable odds, the casualties inflicted on the enemy by the Squadron (including three new pilots) can be considered eminently satisfactory and most encouraging. The ME109's engaged-at great cost to themselves - our fighters in an effort to enable the bombers to get at the convoy. 16 ME109's were disposed of in summary fashion:- 2 destroyed confirmed (P/O.Gray & Sgt.Collett) 4 destroyed unconfirmed (F/Lt.Deere - leading the Sqdn - F/Off. McMullen. P/O.Coleman, P/O.Turley-George.)	

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Rochford	24th	contd.	<p>8 probably destroyed (F/O.McMullen.F/Lt.Way(two) P/O.Gray P/O.Gribble(two) F/Sgt.Tew.P/O.Turley-George.)</p> <p>2 damaged. (P/O.Coleman and P/O.Matthews.)</p> <p>Many more were attacked and may have been damaged. The action was marred by the unfortunate loss of P/O.Allen D.F.C. He was attacked by a ME109 near Margate; he was seen coming down with engine stopped and appeared to be making a forced landing under perfect control. The engine came to life again, and he made for MANSTON; the engine cut a second time and P/O.Allen apparently turned towards FORENESS when he stalled and spun straight into the ground. The loss of P/O.Allen, who had destroyed seven enemy aircraft, will be greatly felt by the whole Squadron. Sergeant Collett forced landed at SIZEWELL (Nr.OXFORDNESS) after chasing a ME109 until he was out of petrol, he received slight injuries on landing. Interesting points from this combat were the success of deflection shooting and the fact that some ME109's are equipped with a rubber dinghy.</p> <p>The following signal was received from H.Q. NO. 11 Group:-</p> <p>"Air Officer Commanding has read with great interest the combat report of No. 54 Squadron and congratulates the leaders and pilots on their magnificent fight against superior numbers. He wishes No. 54 Squadron to know that No.65 and 610 Squadrons were also despatched to intercept the same raid and were also engaged with enemy fighters and bombers." (A.250 24/7.)</p> <p>The Squadron returned to Hornchurch after a month's stay at Rochford.</p>	
Hornchurch.	25th	<p>1432</p> <p>1621</p>	<p>Black Thursday. The Squadron on two occasions bore the brunt of heavy enemy attacks (100 plus plotted) on convoys between DEAL and DOVER. "B" Flight encountered "hordes of JU 87's" with the usual escort of ME109's. Red section were despatched to assist "B" Flight, but no other friendly aircraft were seen until we were leaving the scene of action. 1 Me.109 destroyed, confirmed (F/Lt. Way), 1 Me.109 probably destroyed (P.O. Gray) and 1 Me.109 damaged (S/Ldr. Leathart) are claimed. The loss of F/Lt. Way (missing) in this action was a great tragedy. That he accounted for an enemy aircraft before meeting his unknown fate is typical of his keenness and great courage in the face of odds large or small. P.O. Turley-George was also shot down but although his machine was written off, he himself escaped uninjured.</p> <p>"A" Flight patrolling over DOVER saw a number of enemy xxxxxx M.T.B.s off CALAIS; this report led to the despatch of two destroyers to deal with them and resulted in the second big battle of the day when nearly 100 enemy fighters and bombers descended on the Destroyers. Our squadron (10 aircraft) went to their assistance encountering Ju.88s, Ju 87s and the ever attendant Me.109s. The squadron finding themselves heavily outnumbered, evaded enemy attacks looking for the straggling Me.109 which did not materialise on this occasion. In the initial stages of the attack our cup of woe was filled with the loss of P.O. FINNIE shot xxx down and Killed near DOVER. No enemy casualties are claimed, but our attack so dispersed the fighters that other squadrons coming in to the fight later were able to take toll</p>	

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Hornchurch	26/7	1600	<p>of the enemy bombers.</p> <p>A quiet morning was spent in preparation for a visit to Catterick. For the second time in two months 12 aircraft left for Catterick. A sadly depleted squadron (containing only 6 survivors of Dunkirk) should find the north less exacting, and the stay will afford excellent opportunities of welding together our squadron that may even rival the 54 Squadron of pre-Dunkirk days.</p> <p>No. 41 Squadron from Catterick paid us their second visit, and were soon to be seen in action.</p>	
Catterick	31/7		<p>The squadron became non-operational after two days operational work. The last days of the month were spent in training flying.</p> <p>It was with great satisfaction, and enthusiasm, that the squadron learned of the award to P.O. George Gribble of the D.F.C. One of the few pre-war members of the squadron he is the fifth to be decorated.</p>	