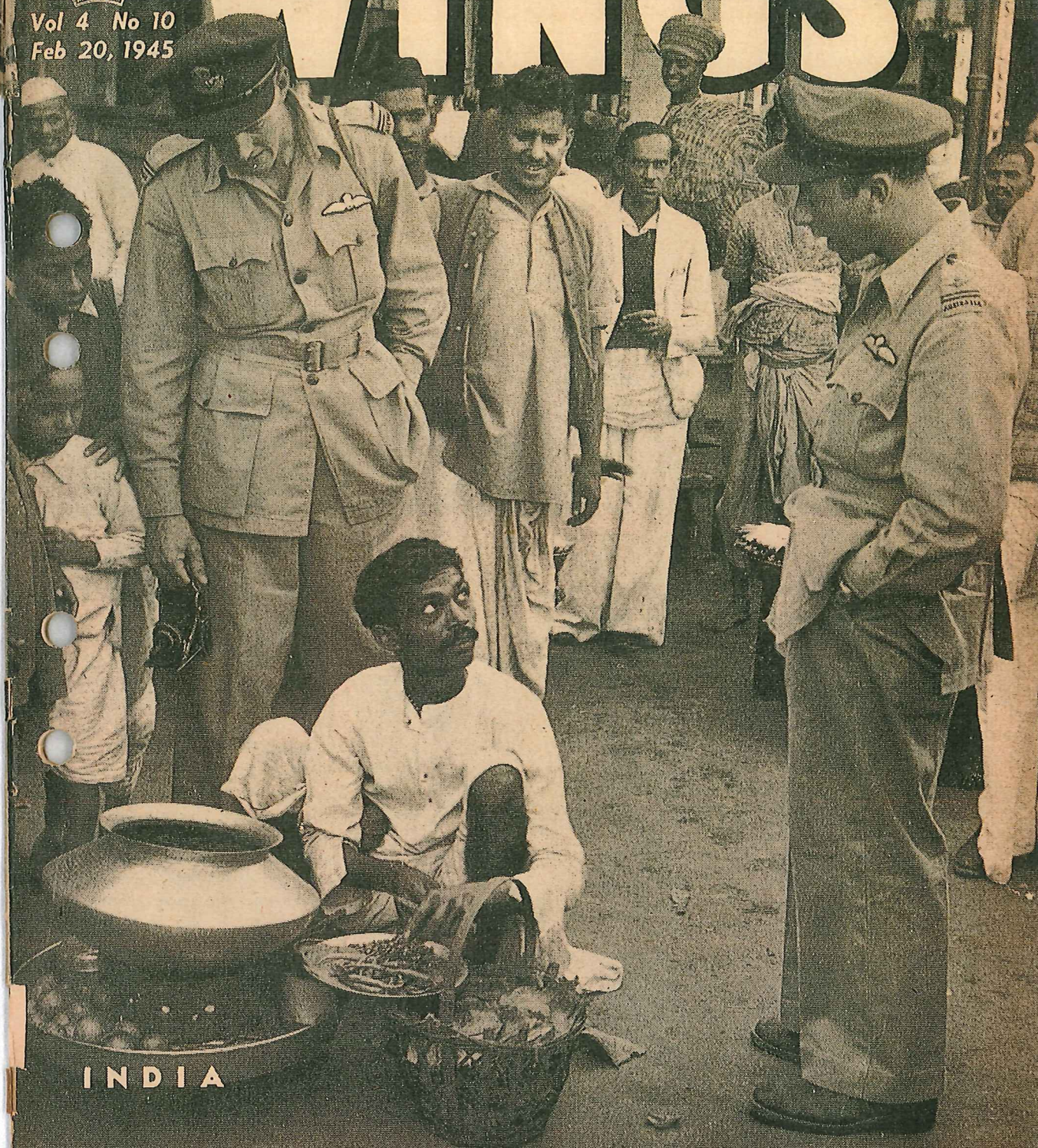




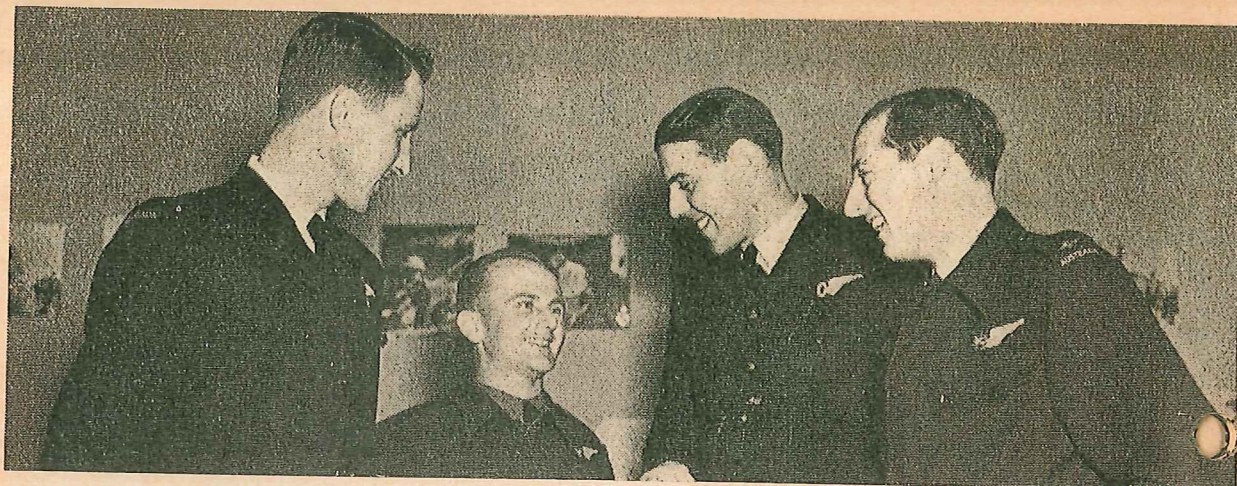
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WINGS



INDIA

STORY OF THE RAAF CATALINAS — Page 2



The men who hit the convoy, Baltimore crewmen F/O Ennis (captain), W/O Burke, F/O Lawton, and W/O Denton.

LOOK THAT SANK A NAZI

NAZI casualty list was —two motor vessels, one destroyer and 6 E-boats sunk. One motor vessel and two destroyers which made Candia harbour were attacked again on the two succeeding days, and one of the destroyers was hit. Beaufighters and Spitfires also destroyed one ME109 and three Arado 196s.

The other day, members of the crew of one of the Australian Baltimores told their story. They were F/O J. R. Ennis, of Balgowlah, NSW (captain) who received the DFC; F/O P. Lawton, of Corinda (navigator); W/O E. J. Denton, of Cottesloe, WA; W/O W. Burke, of Cessnock, NSW (wireless operator-air gunners).

All-in do

"The operation was the last big blitz on enemy shipping in the Aegean—an all-in do by a special strike force consisting of RAF Marauders, Beaufighters, Mustangs and Spitfires, and our Australian Baltimore squadron.

"The waters of the Aegean have now been cleared of German shipping, but at the time of this story, only a few months ago, the enemy was making determined efforts to reinforce his garrisons on the islands there and in Crete. The RAF, supported by RAAF kites from our and another squadron, was making equally determined and jolly successful efforts to stop him.

This is the personal story of one of the most dramatic shipping hunts in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. The look was taken by a RAF Wellington on patrol, and just one look was enough. A powerful RAF and RAAF strike force went in to the "kill."

By Stan Summers, WINGS Middle East Correspondent

"This was the last big convoy the Germans attempted to run from Greece to Crete. They made the attempt on June 1, 1944. It was our crew which obtained the only photographs of the convoy which, it was vitally important to the Germans, should get through."

To strangle the Germans in the islands completely, in the middle of 1944, the RAF and the Royal Navy decided to launch a joint campaign and so wipe out the remaining enemy shipping in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean.

It was known that the Germans were loading the important convoy at the Piraeus, port of Athens, with which they intended to reinforce their garrison on Crete.

The Australian Baltimores had been keeping a vigilant watch on enemy shipping routes for weeks. It was to deal with this convoy when it ventured out that a strike force of Spitfires, Beaufighters, Mustangs, Marauders and Baltimores was gathered together.

On a desert aerodrome that force waited, ready to pounce.

"Soon after midnight on June 1," Ennis and his crew stated, "the convoy sailed from the Piraeus. It consisted of three motor vessels, three destroy-

ers and about six smaller escort boats (E-boats). It had strong air cover the way to Crete—JU88's, ME109's and Arado 196's, usually eight overhead at a time.

"It was immediately sighted by a night-recce Wellington and shadowed until first light to a position south-east of Athens.

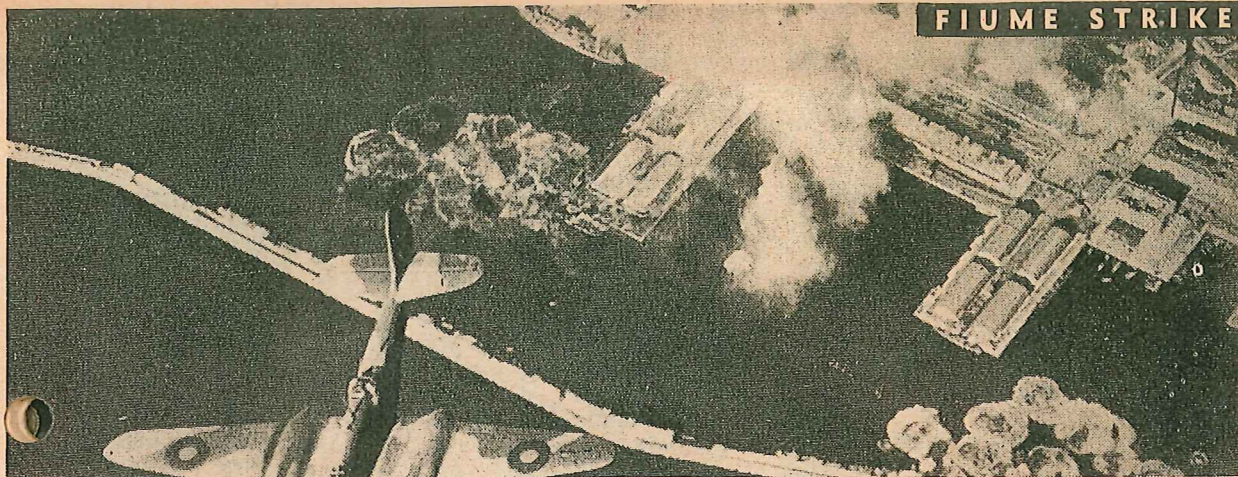
"At 6.30 a.m. the first Australian Baltimore took off from the desert to continue the search, followed by others—including our own—at short intervals. First of the squadron's pilots to locate the convoy was a South African—Captain A. T. Dryden, of Johannesburg.

Convoy shadowed

"We had been briefed to cover the Piraeus channel and the Eastern Aegean, and we picked up Dryden's sighting report, found the convoy south of Pholegandros Island and photographed it."

All day our Baltimores shadowed the ships as they passed between Pholegandros and Melos, and sailed south for Crete, despite the air protection from their own forces which they had all the way.

At 7 o'clock that evening, when the convoy was 30 miles north of Candia,



RAF and RAAF Baltimores of the Desert Air Force attack Fiume harbour and score hits on warehouses and on two ships.

CONVOY

the striking force—including three RAAF Baltimores—attacked.

"Two motor vessels, one destroyer, and probably all the E-boats were sunk," Ennis's crew said. "Beaufighters and Spitfires between them destroyed one ME109 and three Arados. S/Ldr V. Cashmore, of Henly Beach, SA—captain of one of the Australian Baltimores—scored a hit on a motor vessel.

Most spectacular strike

"The strike was one of the most brilliantly organised and spectacularly carried out of the many planned in the Mediterranean.

"Only one motor vessel and two destroyers (which were damaged) made Candia harbour, and there the attack was continued on the two succeeding days, one destroyer being hit. The remaining motor vessel, the Tanais, was sunk by the Royal Navy when she put to sea about ten days later."

Eight Australian Baltimores comprised the force, which shadowed the convoy all through June 1. Four of their captains were RAAF, two RAF and two SAAF. The Australians were F/O Ennis; W/O D. H. C. Dunn, of Home Hill, North Queensland; W/O R. Pedersen, of Sydney; and W/O G. W. Liels, of Leichhardt, NSW, who was lost on the operation.

The three Baltimores in the strike force all of which made attacks on three successive days, first at sea and then at Candia harbour—were captained by S/Ldr Cashmore, P/O V. C. Mitchell, of Kynogle, NSW, and F/Sgt W. Milne (RAF).

Invitation

RAAF Air-portable committee invite any member of a RAAF squadron in the SWPA to tea and talk in Room 209, N Block, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne.

THE RAAF must be made more mobile to keep up with the increased tempo of the Pacific War. More and more Australian squadrons will have to move to new locations—often in isolated areas—at very short notice.

In the past, when a squadron has been under orders to move, the CO has been left to decide what gear he is going to take with him.

Now the RAAF Air-Portable Committee will decide what stores and equipment are essential to a particular unit when it is sent off into the blue.

Once the committee has decided what is to be taken and what is to be left, it will re-design and re-pack all the heavy and bulky items, to make them more easily transportable. So units will have lighter and better equipment and lighter and better packing.

The Committee has set down that the period to be used as a basis for its calculations shall be 14 days. They will first decide what essentials are necessary to keep a particular type of squadron fully operational for the first 14 days after the move, and then, what additional stores and equipment must be flown in, to keep it going for each additional 14 days.

Once it has decided exactly what the squadron will need, the committee must determine how FEW transport

planes are needed to transport the squadron to its new site and keep it supplied.

Notice the deliberate use of the word "few." The movement of squadrons by air is going to become more and more common. This is going to give the transport boys a lot of work, which must be cut down as much as possible.

From this information the committee will draw up a series of tables—one for every different type of squadron.

These tables will show what equipment is to be taken, what each piece of equipment weighs, and what each transport plane carries.

Then the CO of a unit on the move looks up his tables, gets the stuff together and loads it on the planes.

The movement signal will tell him how many transport planes will arrive: his tables will tell him how much each plane will carry, what equipment he is to carry, and how much each item weighs. It will be a piece of cake.

Why you are wanted

Why does the committee want you?

Well, it wants your ideas on what a squadron needs when it goes bush. It wants to know if you have any ideas for the improvement and lightening of equipment. It wants you to say what you consider the best methods of packing to be.

So don't forget, when you are in Melbourne next, to call in and see the blokes in Room 209.