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Part Four: Changes at Poole, with RAF Hamworthy To Maximise Potential'

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Formed in the UK on 25th. April 1942 *Anzac Day*, [461 Squadron RAAF](#) was popularly known as the 'Anzac Squadron'. When initially based for four months at RAF Mount Batten - Plymouth, [461](#) shared the facilities of [10 Squadron RAAF](#), but there was insufficient space at Mount Batten as 461 was to acquire full squadron status, so a move became necessary. An area adjacent to a RN Seaplane Slipway from the Great War at the former [Admiralty Shipyard & Engineering Works](#). at Lake - Hamworthy had been identified as the site, so work had been rapidly undertaken for RAF Poole by 1st. August.

The larger stretches of the Harbour already accommodated the Flying Boats of BOAC and the Fleet Air Arm's Seaplanes so the available sector lay north west of Brownsea Island - which included the Wareham Channel and the [Lake shoreline](#). This was surveyed by [Vic Hodgkinson](#) on 10 Squadron, where his report concluded it was unsuitable...but was overruled !
[Vic Hodgkinson became Wing Commander DFC DFC - and on transfer to BOAC a long-serving & respected Captain: He has made his home at Lymington, and is a founder member of [Solent Sky](#) Southampton also a supporter of PFBC.]



© Vic Hodgkinson via John Witcomb

Picture: Capt. Vic Hodgkinson at the controls of a Sunderland, on 10 Squadron, as stationed at RAF Mount Batten - Plymouth

Vic died on 20th. Nov., 2010: He was the last of the BOAC Flying Boat captains at Poole, so missed by family & friends

Selection of Poole Harbour when facing enemy occupied France, in countering the U-boat menace in the s.w Approaches right down into the Bay of Biscay, may be explained by an unlikely prospect that this might have been the prelude to 461 moving from [RAF Coastal Command No.19 Group](#) to transport ops: For the threat to shipping routes was so significant !
[However, 461 Squadron Sunderlands were deployed for transport duties to support Operation Torch - November 1942.]

The base was renamed as [RAF Hamworthy](#), and the move was underway on 31st. August by special train to Hamworthy Junction Station for personnel, whilst the wagons were shunted down the branch-line to a long siding which served Lake. [PFBC HLM - John Witcomb](#) also recalls the use of Queen Mary Transporters. John had worked as a carpenter and joiner before joining the RAF - being trained at Compton Bassett & Cosford, before becoming an aircraftsman at Mount Batten. [John still lives locally, and with his wife Emily enjoyed attending the Launch of [PFBC's FB & Seaplane Storyboards](#).]

Picture: 461 at RAF Hamworthy - Groundcrew Members hauling Beaching Wheels up the Slipway; with Control /Watch Bldg. in the background of the Hard-standing
(Courtesy of [WA:RAAF Archive](#))



© PFBC

Relocation involved 130 personnel, and RAF Hamworthy had a squadron strength totalling 256, eventually rising to 300. Initial lay-out of the Runway was in a channel flanked by mud flats, where its constraints demanded much skill and care. The former seaplane moorings, lying along the Wareham Channel just north of the Arne peninsula were allocated at first, but as with the Runway, these were later repositioned to run parallel to the Lake and the [Lower Hamworthy](#) foreshores...



Picture: Sunderland Mk III
EJ 134 UT-N 'N for Nuts'
is resting upon its Beaching
Wheels - to the back of the
Yard at RAF Hamworthy...
Bicycles were issued to the
Groundcrew as Transport !

(Courtesy WA:RAAF Archive)

The facilities were fairly *ad hoc*, dotted around [RAF Hamworthy](#): Slipways, Hardstanding, Control Tower & Workshops: At first the former Seaplane Moorings were used off the north shore of Arne & then further down the Wareham Channel.

[Lake area](#): Airmen's Mess, Control Bldg, Wireless Offices & WO Stores, Ammo. Stores, Medical Officer + Guardhouse, Fuel Depot, also the pier for RAF Launches. [In central Poole](#): Station Switchboard, extra Workshops and the Sgts' Mess, and also in spread along [Parkstone Road](#) (opposite the Park): No.43 Station HQ, 51 Ops Room, and 45 Accounts Section.

[Ashley Cross](#): WAAF Mess + WAAF Hostels at Stretton Court & Merrion - Castle Hill; also Varena on Springfield Rd.

[Lilliput](#): Station Sick Quarters at 'Folly Cottage' (Dorset Lake Ave.) + Airmen's Mess at the Blue Lagoon Lido Building, [The Station Headquarters of RAF Hamworthy were to move to the former PHC at Salterns, for January 1943.]

[Luscombe](#): Officers' Quarters and Off. Mess Facilities at the Harbour Heights Hotel, Harbour Court and Brudenel House. *Other Billets* were located in the Lake/Hamworthy area, in Poole and its localities, also various suburbs of Bournemouth. *Public Houses* frequented were the Red Lion at Hamworthy, Longfleet Hotel, Sloop, Shah of Persia, and Beehive Hotels.

[*Lake Fuel Depot* built for IAL's move, now also supplied RAF Hamworthy and various bases in Dorset & Hampshire.]

Picture: Sunderland Mk III
EJ 134 UT-N 'N for Nuts'
~ also Mk II T9109 UT-D
at RAF Hamworthy 1942-3.
The view in the background
is towards the Dorset Lake
Shipyard; in the foreground
is the reinforced Slipway...
(Courtesy WA:RAAF Archive)

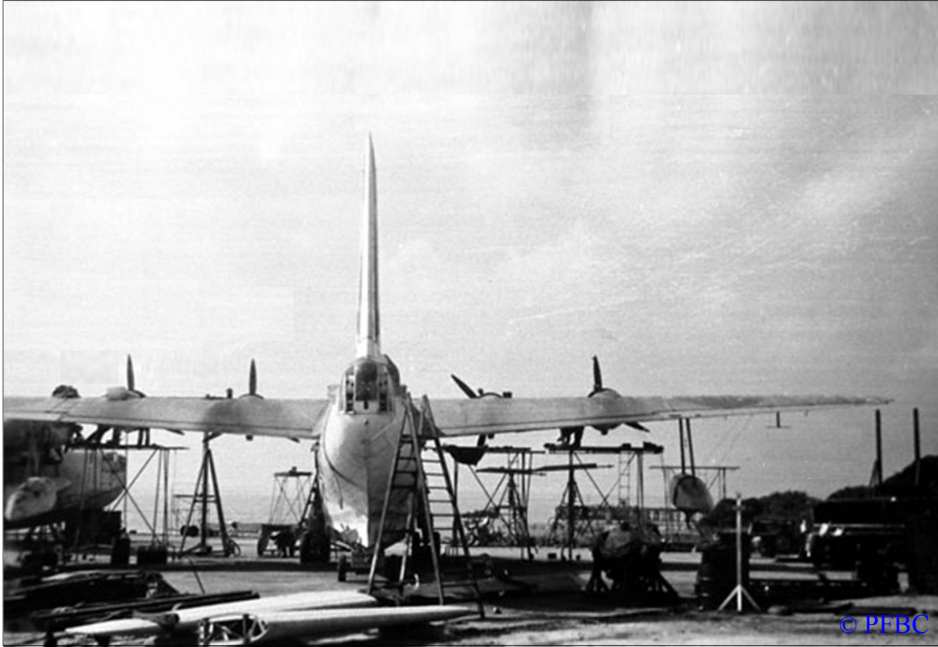


A large marquee was acquired for multi-use in the base. There were no hangars available to RAF Hamworthy, therefore aircraft could only be serviced or repaired (often on the moorings), whilst overhauls were carried out at bases elsewhere.

On arrival, ready for Ops on 5th. September, were 6 [Sunderland Flying Boats](#): the [Mk.IIs T9111 \(UT-C\)](#), T9114 (UT-E), and T9115 (UT-K); with new [Mk IIIs](#) DV960 (UT-H), DV961 (UT-I), also W6050 (UT-L), as additions to 461 Squadron.

The Station Commander [Group Captain CG Wigglesworth, AFC](#), next took delivery of new DV968 (UT-M) for October then the return of [T9085 \(UT-A\)](#) and T9109 (UT-D) for November after overhauls, to bring squadron strength up to nine.

On 2nd. November 1942 [Capt. Derek Martin](#) brought the further new MkIII: [EJ134](#) from Rochester to Poole, for delivery to RAF Hamworthy, where this aircraft then successfully completed 10 operational patrols as [UT-N](#) [**aka 'N for Nuts'*].



Picture: Sunderland Mk III
EJ 134 UT-N 'N for Nuts'
is resting upon its Beaching
Wheels at RAF Hamworthy
- surrounded and supported
by maintenance scaffolding
in looking towards the front
of the Hard-standing & the
Wareham Channel at Lake
(Courtesy WA:RAAF Archive)

In January 1943, the Station HQs relocated to the former [Harbour Club at Salterns](#), as this was now vacated by the Army. It provided much better facilities shoreside, and with its substantial wooden pier. Yet there was still a 4 mile journey by launch from [RAF Hamworthy](#) (further across Poole on bicycle). Then a final stint over [Evening Hill](#) to [Harbour Heights](#) !

However, soon tragedy struck on 21st. January when [T9085 \(UT-A\)](#) was lost in severe weather out in the s.w Approaches and despite a search of the area following receipt of an SOS, no signs of the aircraft & its 11 crew members were located: ~ FltLt B.L Buls, FlgOff H.L Osborne, PltOff J.H Moore, PltOff N.J.C Dent, Sgt R Tucker, Sgt J.W Gill, FSgt E Bradle, Sgt O.S Filmer, Sgt. N.H.R Hart, Sgt P Evans + AC R.E Elrick: [**PFBC is determined that they shall not pass unseen !*]

Mercifully, a tragedy was averted on 21st. March when [T9111](#) broke apart on take-off, veering to the side of the Runway and not sinking - so that the crew was safely evacuated: It was reckoned that this aircraft [UT-C](#) (~ aka '[Half-and-Half](#)'), which had been previously assembled from two Sunderlands, had experienced structural failure when maximising power.

Picture: Sunderland Mk II
T9111 UT-C (Half & Half)
- after crashing on take-off
at Poole, 21st March 1943.

(Courtesy WA:RAAF Archive)

~ ~ ~
Note the 'stickleback' ASV
radar aerials along the back
of the fuselage...

(Colin Pomeroy)



A pair of 461 Sunderlands at RAF Hamworthy, were later involved in extraordinary deeds of courage, daring and skill: ~ [EJ134 'N for Nuts'](#) was beached at Praa in S. Cornwall, after its epic encounter on 2nd. June 1943 with eight Junkers 88s, when five were destroyed with the others badly damaged, leaving *N for Nuts* with gaping holes, and presumed to be lost !



Photo: Courtesy of John Witcomb



Photo: Courtesy of John Witcomb

Pictures: Two Photographs of 461 Squadron Sunderland MkIII EJ134 as *UT-N 'N for Nuts'*, which just made it back to Praa Sands !

[T9114 \(UT-E\)](#) when damaged during a dramatic air sea rescue, could not make it back to RAF Pembroke Dock, and was landed on a grassed strip by [Capt. Gordon Singleton \(PFBC - HLM\)](#) at Angle Field, not far from the base, on 29th. May !



Photo: Courtesy of Gordon Singleton

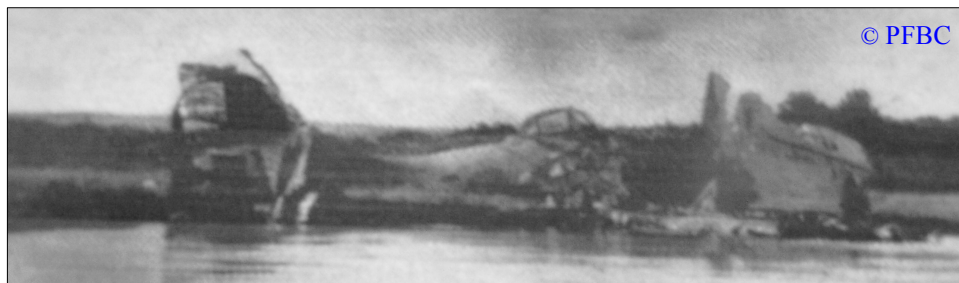
Picture: The Sunderland Mk II T9114 *UT-E* on a grassed strip at Angle Field - Pembrokeshire, where it landed when piloted by [Capt. Gordon Singleton](#) who is still wearing his flying helmet - in standing fourth from the left !

[Capt. Martin](#) again flew to Poole 9th. March 1943, with Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip B Joubert de la Ferté, in Sunderland [JM670](#) from [Pembroke Dock](#) presumably for an inspection, before returning minus his VIP passenger, who journeyed on. This was a prelude to the ending of operational duties for 461 at [RAF Hamworthy](#) on 21st. April, switched to Pembroke Dock with the squadron's move to there, where greater facilities permitted its strength to be increased to 13 Sunderlands.

As replacement, [210 Squadron](#) began its move to Poole and [RAF Hamworthy](#) on 18th. April, to take over ops on the 21st. As the [Catalina Squadron](#), because of the [Consolidated PBYS: I, II + IIIs](#), with which it was re-equipped from June 1941, 210 Squadron when based at [Oban](#) (operating in a North Atlantic sector) had been involved in the hunt for the [Bismarck](#). [FP232](#) overdue on 14th. June at RAF Hamworthy from Biscay Patrol was sadly presumed lost with all 10 crew members.

Detachments to [Gibraltar](#) continued throughout - when the squadron was transferred to Sullom Voe, then Pembroke Dock on 2nd. October 1942, followed by [RAF Hamworthy](#). So the Squadron strength at 'home base' was variously 9 - 12 Cats. Early morning on 24th. August 1943, when returning from a training exercise, before first light & encountering thick fog, in an abortive attempt at make its landing [FP287](#) failed to regain height - crashing into the marshes just off [Round Island](#) !

Picture: Catalina [FP287/E](#) when at RAF Hamworthy, with 210 Squadron (1943) in straddling the marshes off Round Island in Poole Harbour after crashing on landing - early morning...



© PFBC

With difficulty in locating the position of this aircraft, by the time that rescuers arrived several crew had already perished, some others were in a bad way: Despite help from HMS Turtle medics, Sgt G Harper subsequently died from his injuries. FO Duff, WA Hobson, FO M Cohen, FSgt Rasmussen, Sgt A.B Allen, Sgt M.W Doyle & Sgt F Frogson were also killed. The 4 who survived this horrific experience were:- PC Ahmed, Sgt J.S Garnett, Sgt R.J Kingston and WOp/AG Sgt Eley.

With the disbanding of 210 Squadron when at Poole (31st. December) its Detachment in Gibraltar was transferred to 202.

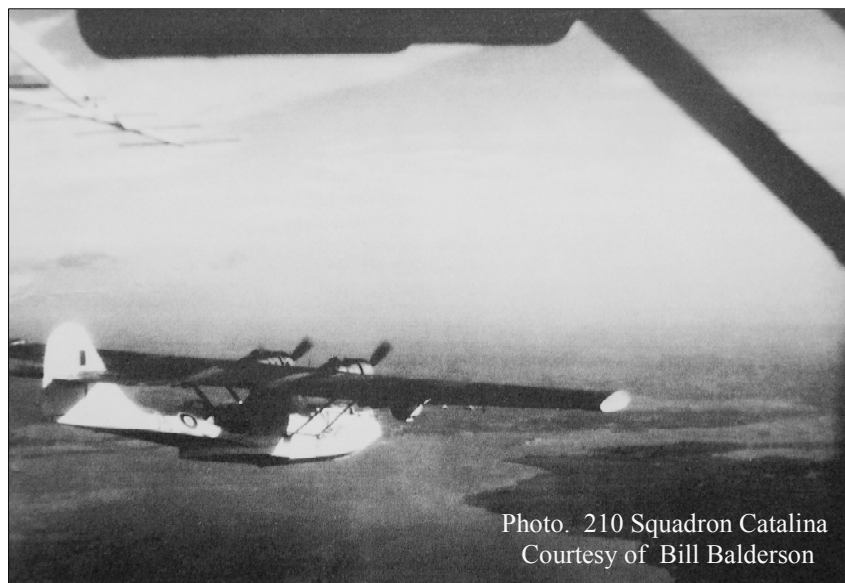


Photo. 210 Squadron Catalina
Courtesy of Bill Balderson



Jack Garnett with John Alexander Cruickshank VC

However, 210 was duly reformed at Sullom Voe through the renumbering of 190, with Squadron personnel still including [John Alexander Cruickshank VC](#). [Our Charity is very proud to have him as our most decorated Honorary Life Member.] When on an anti-submarine patrol 17th. July 1944, in piloting [JV 928Y](#) U-361 was attacked (initially identified as U-347) and was sunk following an encounter where he received 72 wounds, but refused morphia so that he continue in command. Lapsing in and out of consciousness, the aircraft headed for base, but could not alight there until conditions had improved. The subsequent award of a Victoria Cross cited his outstanding example of determination, fortitude and devotion to duty ! [Following VE Day 8th. May 1945, 210 Squadron disbanded on 4th. June: Squadron Motto '[Hovering in the Heavens](#)'.]

Poole's honoured association with the Consolidated-PBY Catalinas, and Cansos (manufactured under licence in Canada), included other dimensions beyond BOAC's contingent (7) and those on 210 Squadron, for others eg [FP 302/WQR](#) on 209 were directed here. Some Catalinas of the US Forces also put in, whereas [Bernie Wills](#) (PFBC HLM) recalls towing-in to safety one which had to land close to Bournemouth pier due to engine failure. Poole had been designated by the RAF as a diversion airport for FB Deliveries. *[Colin Pomeroy](#) in 'The Flying Boats of Bermuda' notes Poole's involvement in this.

13th. January 1944 Transport Command took control of [RAF Hamworthy](#), but as an RAF base it was closed on 1st May - the RN had already moved in, and this area came under the curtilage of HMS Turtle with various preparations for D-Day. In April BOAC with Transport Command, took over all facilities at [Salterns](#) & freed up Poole Quay for American Forces. [Capt. H.W.C Jimmy Alger](#), who piloted [G-ADUW Castor](#) in IAL's inaugural flight for [Empire Airmail Scheme](#) (EAMS) from Southampton to Australia in 1937, replaced [Gerry Hawtin](#) to take command of [BOAC's No.4 Line at Poole](#) in 1946. [[USCG \(United States Coastguard\) Rescue Flotilla One](#) was based at Poole with its 60 Cutters for Operation Overlord.]

From May until September BOAC (with Transport Command), relocated Flying Boat Ops from Poole to Pembroke Dock. BOAC MCU retained its small [Launch House](#) on the eastside of Hamworthy with its slipway, on the opposite side of the Backwater Channel to the [British Power Boat Co.](#) (of Hythe) at their No.2 Yards ~ building MTBs and HSL Whalebacks.

The next occasion Capt. Martin was at Poole, he was in charge of the Coastal Command Air Navigation School at Sillioth. However, he was now on his way to a significant posting in India where he would be the Chief of Staff for [Operation Pharos](#). As he was booked with BOAC, the procedure was to report in at [Airways House](#) by Victoria, before journeying to Poole. For as [Capt. Martin](#) recalls: “...on a luxurious train...like the Orient Express one occasionally sees on the films.”

“ We had the full BOAC treatment and left Poole on 2nd. December 1944 in [Sunderland ML727](#), with [Flt.Lt. Needham](#). ”

[Note: [ML727](#) was then [OQZZ](#), and later Hythe Class [G-AGHZ Hawkesbury](#)]

His route was from [Salterns](#) to Gibraltar, next Djerba (Tunisia), Cairo, Habbanyia, Bahrein (The Gulf), and on to Karachi, before transfer to Delhi. His eventual destination was to be the Cocos Is. off Japanese-occupied Java to build an airfield ! Flying Boats from Poole were again reaching out to the Middle East, India, and towards various destinations far & wide...

(*Aimée* - acknowledgement(s) to Mike Phipp, also Air Commodore Norman Ashworth, Harold Bennett & Colin Pomeroy, with John Alexander Cruickshank VC, Douglas Cook OBE, Derek Martin DFC, Gordon Singleton & John Witcomb, as well as to John Evans of the Pembroke Dock Sunderland Trust, also David Legg of the Catalina Society.)

Aircraft on 461 and 210 Squadrons at RAF Hamworthy

© Poole Flying Boats Celebration 2008

RAAF

(after Air Comm. Norman Ashworth PFBC)

~~~Short S.25 Sunderland Mk.III~~~

(RAAF 461 Squadron transferred from Mount Batten <sup>i</sup>)

|       |      |                             |                |                             |       |                                                                            |
|-------|------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| T9085 | UT-A | 5 <sup>th</sup> . Sept 1942 | <sup>i</sup> → | 21 <sup>st</sup> . Jan. '43 | 8 Ops | Lost on Ops in bad weather Western Approaches with 11 crew members *       |
| T9109 | UT-D | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | April 1943                  | 20    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (2 Ops)                                          |
| T9111 | UT-C | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | March 1943                  | 18    | Wrecked 21.03.1943 in Poole Harbour: Broke up on take-off → minor injuries |
| T9114 | UT-E | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | April 1943                  | 25    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (4)                                              |
| T9115 | UT-K | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | April 1943                  | 24    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (-)                                              |
| DV960 | UT-H | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | April 1943                  | 25    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (6 → 5)                                          |
| DV961 | UT-I | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | April 1943                  | 22    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (31)                                             |
| W6050 | UT-L | "                           | <sup>i</sup> → | April 1943                  | 12    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (10)                                             |
| DV968 | UT-M | September 1942              | →              | April 1943                  | 26    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (23)                                             |
| EJ134 | UT-N | December 1942               | →              | April 1943                  | 10    | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (6)                                              |
| JM675 | UT-O | March 1943                  | →              | April 1943                  | 6     | → to Pembroke Dock on 461 (5)                                              |

RAAF 461 Squad Strength → 5<sup>th</sup>. September 1942 = **9** December 1942 = **10** January 1943 = **9** 21<sup>st</sup>. April 1943 = **9** ..... Total Ops = 196

461 Personnel Sept. 1942 Total =256

End March 1943 RAAF Offs aircrew (41) ground staff (5) airmen-aircrew (41) ground staff (31)

RAF Offs aircrew (3) ground staff (5) airmen-aircrew (36) ground staff (106)

RCAF airmen-ground staff (12) WAAF women-ground staff (13) ....

Total approx 300

\* Pilot Flt Lt BL Buls Pilot Flg Off HL Osborne Plt Off JH Moore PltOff NJCDent (Nav/B) Sgt R Tucker (F/Eng)  
Sgt JW Gill FSgt E Bradle (RAF) Sgt OS Filmer Sgt NHR Hart Sgt P Evans (RAF) AC RE Elrick

## RAF

~~~ Consolidated PBY-5A Catalina ~~~

(RAF 210 Squadron)

(after Bill Balderson PFBC)

FP115/F

FP131/G Detached to Gib. → to No.302 FTU

FP155/F → June 21st. 1943 Det to Gib Lost: 2 crew members killed - WOp Yarnell and F/O Hunter

FP174/C → to No.302 FTU

FP185/K → to No.302 FTU

FP213/E left at Gib. on 202 Squad

FP232/P 21st. April 1943 → 13/14th June 1943 Biscay Patrol Lost : FTR to RAF Ham when due on 14th ... had left RAF Ham on 13th all 10 aircrew then presumed to have been lost at sea **

FP237/O left at Gib. on 202 Squad

FP249/N → Nov. 1943 Detached to Gib. left at Gib. on 202 Squad

FP252/M → Nov. 1943 Detached to Gib. → back to Ham Dec.1943 → to No.302 FTU

FP254/D → Nov. 1943 Detached to Gib. → back to Ham Dec.1943 → then to 43 Group

FP259/L left at Gib. on 202 Squad

FP262/A → June 21st. & Nov.'43 Det to Gib. → back to Ham Dec.1943 → to No.302 FTU

FP264/G

FP277/B → June 21st. 1943 Detached to Gib.

FP287/E 21st. April 1943 → 24th. Aug.. 1943 Lost 04:35/24 hrs Harbour landing in fog somersaulted towards Round Is. 7 of the 12 crew members were lost; an eighth died later ***

FP318 → to No.302 FTU

RAF 210 Squad Strength → 21st. April 1943 = _ 1st. June 1943 = 10 19th. November 1943 = 10 210 Squad. Disbanded early January 1944 15 Crews + one extra from 1st. October 1943 (4 FBs and 5 crews detached to Gib Nov.1943)

** FO G Silva DFC (RAAF) FO RB Albon (WOp/AG) (RAAF) FO WM Randolph PO Gardiner FSgt Everitt Sgt Fosh
_ _ Brockenshire Sgt Modges Sgt Meares Sgt Reid

*** FO Duff PO WA Hobson FO M Cohen FSgt Rasmussen Sgt AB Allen Sgt MW (Mick) Doyle Sgt. Frogson
WOp/AG G (Geoff) Harper (died next day) [Survivors: PO Ahmed Sgt JS Garnett Sgt J (Jim) Kingston WOp/AG Sgt Eley]

RAF Station at Hamworthy closed 30.04.1944