

## **Wednesday 1st June 1921**

It is a bit cooler today. The official maximum (shade) for Monday was 109.9 degrees practically 110 degrees, or 12 degrees over blood heat. Tuesday it was 99 degrees, and today the same. Sunday must have been about as hot as Monday. But these hot spells don't last very long, only a few days at a time, I am told, as on this occasion. Most people tell you blood-curdling yarns about the heat of the late summer months but that is always the way - to pull the leg of the greenhorn. Capt. Butler, of the Baghdad C.I.D. tells me that the summer heat isn't much worse than the heat of Sunday and Monday. I hope he's right.

In the evening McEvoy called for me at 8pm and together we went to North Gate Barracks, and dined with the 6th Lambs, as they are called. The light Armoured Motor Battery is the full title. They have a "Lamb" as their emblem and are very proud of it. Many of the units in Baghdad have emblems or signs of their own. This is the sign of the No. 1115 Mechanical Transport Company R.A.S.C. - it is painted on all their lorries and cars. Sixteen there were to dinner and a very jolly dinner it was. My host, the V.C. Capt. Pullar, had a touch of Malaria, but it wore off a bit later and he was a most entertaining talker. He was a machine gun Officer nearly throughout the Great War and won the Military Cross twice. The entrance has two big electric lights and these served to light the table, but they also attracted some enormous winged beetles and locusts and earwigs and other fearsome beasts. At twelve o'clock a fine Vauxhall car came round to fetch us and we travelled home in the greatest of comfort. Pullar told me some wonderful Tanks were coming out in the Autumn which can do 30 miles an hour and swim a river. That'll be the "Stuff to give 'em".

## **Thursday 2 June 1921**

As we motored down New Street this morning Pickard and I met our friends the "LAMBS" coming back from a morning demonstration. Twelve of these iron cars there were. The driver peers through a slit in the front, and there is an arrangement like an upright cylinder where the guns and the gunners stand. They give one a strong sense of security very pleasant indeed to feel in this country, with its fanatical inhabitants. These cars run on

Rolls-Royce chassis, the very ones the fatuous "Daily Mail" made such a song about last year as an instance of the way the Government was pouring out the poor tax payers' money. As a matter of fact, the Rolls-Royce chassis is the only one which satisfactorily bears the Armoured car, far and away the best, and as the Armoured car is an absolute need out here in view of the smallness of the garrison, it follows that if the D.M. had its way it would deny the garrison the means to protect itself and hand it over to the fanatical cut-throats of this desert. Aeroplanes and Armoured cars are the future policy.

After tiffin, I felt an overwhelming desire to sleep, so I slept until 4 : then I got up had tea, dressed, and about 4.30 Horton called for me and we went up to the Sporting Club. It was quite nice and cool up there and I enjoyed my game. We played 15 holes and I finished 4 up and 3 to play. Thursday is the Gala day at the Club and Lady Cox and all the local beauties (British) were there. Afterwards, a ripping ice-cream and a drink and then a drive home in the cool of the evening, tired and content.

### **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1921**

The Kings Birthday - and a general holiday. In the morning there was a great Ceremonial Parade, but Pickard and I determined to have a day off absolutely on our own. We set off at 9.15 a.m. and took a gharri as far as the Sporting Club. There we dismissed the Gharri and struck off to the left through some gardens to the River, and then North along the River bank towards Muadhaim, by the mud villages, through gardens where oranges and pomegranates were growing, through date groves, along the hard high bund, sometimes in the sun, but more often in a welcome shade, a nice breeze blowing. At one place on the bund we came across a grove of mulberry trees, with the fat luscious purple fruit ripe and ready to drop. What a feed we had until we came to the conclusion that we had better be more moderate or a bad tummy-ache might be the result. Muahhaim is a well-known town with a famous Mosque of the Sunni sect of Mohammedans. The name is pronounced "MARZAM". It is also one of the chief places where the strange circular boats called Gufas are made. They are shaped just like a bulb bowl, made of strong thick wicker work which is first tarred all over inside and out and then covered with a

thick coat of pitch. Some of them hold 20 persons or several tons of cargo. At one place we came across several in the making and photographed them. The kids of the villages all seemed pleased to see us except sometimes the littlest ones who cried bitterly at our approach, being afraid perhaps of the "evil eye" which many of the natives still think the "infidel" possesses. When we distributed bucksheesh however their fear passed away. Primitive methods of irrigation were in use at some places, side by side with the modern oil engine pumping hundreds of gallons per minute. At one place a pony was working a rope and skin contrivance which ran over a roller into the river and was pulled up by the pony walking down a steep slope. This was in charge of a blind man. The skin would pull up about 10 gallons a minute, I suppose. At another place a man had a garden down by the rivers edge and was walking along in the river, stark naked, throwing up water with his hands onto his garden! Just by were three men engaged in washing sheep and ox skins in the river and beating them with thick sticks standing in the water up to their thighs. Things are still done in this primitive manner and our walk was proving most interesting. A little further was the town of Muadhaim (Marzam.) Here were many more gufas in the making at a sort of little bay and we stopped here some minutes watching the young Arabs swimming. When they found we were interested they all stripped themselves and took running jumps from the quay- side, swam round to the shore and so on, again and again. We had a string of about 10 or more of these youngsters performing for us. So we bought up the stock of a "curly-cake" vendor and had all these boys up and gave each one. What a crowd it was, sturdy youngsters 10 - 12 years old, brown, wet, stark naked, absolutely unconscious of it too.

Muadhaim was once, in the days of Caliph Haroun ar-Rashid, a suburb of Baghdad, and is even now a quite well built town, many good brick houses in most of the streets. We wandered through, and eventually found our way back to the River again, this time at the Police Station which was just by the place where the ferry boat plies. This boat ferries people across the Tigris for Kadhimain (pronounced KAZIMAIN) with its wonderful Shiah Mosque the domes and minarets of which we could see through the date-palms, covered with gold, glistening in the sun. We were debating whether we would risk the journey across to Kazimain, it being

reputed to be a dangerous place during Ramadhan. While we were debating, one of the policemen standing near I asked him how far Kazimain was across the river and he told me "5 minutes". I tried him in Hindustani which he knew, being a Persian, and said that if we wished to go to Kazimain he would go with us. Over the river in the native boat, with a crowd of Arabs, we went and through the date palms, suddenly bursting on the golden Mosque. I had never seen it from this side before, that is from the cemetery. This is a very sacred Mosque and many people bring their dead long distances to bury them here. We walked with our guide through the Bazaar and looked through the great entrance door of the Mosque; I took a picture of the courtyard, a very impressive square. From there we went up on the roof of a house just overlooking the Mosque and got a good photo of the domes and minarets. This we would never have attempted had we not had our guide. While he had his dinner, we went to a native refreshment house and had lemonade, and by this time we were very thirsty and it was very welcome.

It was now 1 o'clock, and as the next tram didn't leave Kazimain for Baghdad until 3 p.m. we returned to Muadhaim with our Policeman. We stopped at a little tea house by the ferry, opposite Marzam, and had water and tea, surrounded by natives who appeared delighted with the honour we paid them. Our policeman told us his name was Riza Khan No: 314 and that he was a Persian. He had a very poor opinion of the Arabs. Arrived at the other side, he took us through the Bazaar and hailed an arabana by which we journeyed back to Baghdad, arriving at our billet at 2.30. We had tiffin and then slept from 3 to 5, when tea and then a little work.

We had a guest at dinner named Mr. Levack, manager of David Sassoons Ltd, a very interesting man and very despondent at the way that England is losing her hold in the East owing to the fatuous policy of the British working man, who doesn't understand that by ruining his own country he is ruining himself.

I think that today has been the happiest day I have had in Mesopotamia.

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

Max. temperature yesterday in the shade 107<sup>0</sup>F.

Captain Townshend left today for Basrah en route to England: in a week or two's time Padre Webb goes: it is extremely probable that of Marsh and Alexander one will have to go - it is a sadly anxious mess - "J" Mess GHQ - just now.

All this week I have been troubled by Officers who have come down into Baghdad on the evacuation of Persia, bringing into the Office their rotten a/ccs, not as a rule worth the paper written on, certainly not worth auditing. I shall be glad when I have seen the last of them.

In the afternoon, just after 4, Horton called for me, with two other fellows and we all went down to the Sporting Club and had an afternoon's golf. It is not a very severe exercise, probably not as good as tennis, but it opens the frame and keeps one loose in limb and the two hours walk which it entails must do one good. Anyway, I generally come back to the Clubhouse feeling just p73 nicely tired, and I don't want to do much after dinner but sleep. I played Lt. Herbert and we ended up, after 15 holes, all square.

### **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

Today has been hot again, and since going to Communion at 7 this morning I didn't stir out until tonight. After breakfast I did some work and then wrote until tiffin; this afternoon slept and wrote again. It is strange this desire to sleep in the afternoon - I am told that later on it becomes impossible to fight against - everybody sleeps in the afternoon.

This evening Marsh had two lady guests for dinner and made the greatest preparations to receive them. He borrowed all our carpets, bought a huge bunch of flowers, several special bottles of wine, and we had an absolutely 'posh' dinner. The ladies were Miss Alban, Matron of the Military Isolation Hospital, and Miss Bell, a sister of the same, both members of the Q.A.I.M.N.S. The Matron was very jolly and talked the whole time. Webb was out of his element with the ladies, but Marsh was absolutely in it and was in great form. We played ping-pong of course and the ladies went home at about 11 p.m. after declaring that our mess was the nicest and most tasteful in Baghdad.

## **Monday 6 June 1921**

Today has been a scorcher. Well above the usual temperature, I should think. I am still being worried with the Persian Line Officers, though it should now begin to ease off a little.

Tiffin was a rotten meal, one didn't want much, anyhow. The meat was tough, which is unusual. The meat out here is, on the whole, good - the mutton especially. The sheep grown are the fat-tailed sheep, which instead of the little woolly tail of the English sheep have an enormous great blob of fat, about 8" square or more, and 3-4 inches thick. It must weigh 3-4 lbs. at least. The rest of the body is fleshy, very little fat. The goat is very largely grown and feeds on bits of rock, barbed wire and so on, I think! These are for the Indian part of the population mostly. But the great lumbering water buffalo takes my fancy. He is a very primitive animal compared with our cattle, with very few straggly hairs on his black hide, a thin sort of head and two rudimentary toes each side of his hoofs. During the hot weather, he spends most of his time in the water. The only other flesh commonly eaten is the fowl, which is smaller and not nearly so nice as our English fowls, and the hen's eggs are much smaller, too. Of course, the sporty officers go out with their guns occasionally into the "blue" and shoot a few wild fowl, partridges and hares. But we're all padres and civilians and our guns are nil!

## **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

Great rejoicings in the Mohammedan world today, for at 7 o'clock tonight the fast of Ramazan finished and the feast of Ramazan began. 30 days it has lasted and no food has been touched by the devout Mahommedan between 3 something in the morning until 7 something in the morning. My servant has stuck it well, but was very excited tonight when the guns were fired, about 20 I should think, in celebration of the finish of the fast. We watched the fun from the elevation of the roof and could see children on the roofs of other houses cheering lustily at each bang! They don't like Ramazan, that's evident, and are glad it's over. As a matter of fact, it is a silly business, when one comes to think of it. In the

afternoon Pickard and I went to the hospital to see Stevens and found his eye so much better that he thought he would be discharged soon. On our way up to the North Gate the Coffee houses were all open and crowded, and in a little open space near the gate were a number of swing-wheels and other amusements for children (the Arab counterpart to our fair). The swing-wheel is shaped like this and has 6 chairs on it.

[Drawing to be scanned in here](#)

The whole thing is revolved by a man and in the process the chairs revolve with the wheel and swing backwards and forwards. Great fun! Everybody is out in their best, and there is going to be a great Tamasha tonight.

On the roof one was painfully aware of it. Cars and gharris coming and going, bands and singing, plenty of noise - that's how your Eastern likes his holiday. Pickard couldn't get to sleep so came downstairs but I didn't lie awake long. It was very windy and one gets covered with dust then - but no-one minds dust in this country, where dust is the chief characteristic!

### **Wednesday 8 June 1921**

Today was another Gala day for the Mohammedans, the second day of the feast of Ramadan. The guns have been firing most of the day and I hope that it is now all over. The whole thing is a farce.

The temperature maximum today (shade) was 107° officially, but I think that actually it was much higher. The temperature at Basrah, so Rice writes, has been 118.9°, and it must have been quite disagreeable, for the heat at Basrah is a moist heat and much harder to bear. Here in Baghdad I cannot say it has been too bad, and I am told that with the exception of a few days in August, when a hot south wind blows, it is never much worse than at present. If that is true, then a lot of the yarns spun for my benefit have been pure moonshine. I find that one does not get particularly 'knocked' unless one goes too much into the sun in the mid-day hours. Keep out of the sun is the tip. Drink as much as you want in between meals. Not too much with meals. And I'm told today - eat sparingly. I'm afraid I'm eating too much and

getting too fat. But everyone seems to eat tremendously out here. The heat, I suppose, makes all exercise so much greater exertion that one's bodily tissues wear out at a quicker rate and one has, or gets the feeling that one has, more wastage to make up. At all events, one gets very hungry and then makes the mistake of eating a lot when only a little is required.

Tonight we went to dinner at Mr Levack's, the manager of David Sassoon's, a big firm out here. He has the most delightful billet on the River side, a two-storey house around a spacious courtyard containing date palms and pomegranates, with a wide verandah all around wide enough to set a dining table with guests each side and then room for the servants to move each side (about as wide as our dining room at 'Meadview'). The verandah is roofed over and running round the front of the house faces the River. A nice cool evening breeze was blowing and it was delightful to sit here and watch the lights on the River and in the big houses etc. the other side, and on the bellums making their way up and down. We had a most sumptuous repast, far more both in viands and wines than one wants or is good for one - but this is one of the customs of the country that the European has taken to - feasting. There were 6 guests, including two men of the Civil Administration, the Director of Architecture and the Deputy Director of Agriculture. The conversation at the dinner table was most interesting - exciting almost - and I could have listened for hours. Levack, our host, is a most cultured and widely travelled man and with others of similar nature, the conversation never flagged. I could take no part in it except to ask questions.

Afterwards a laze on the verandah and a cigar and liqueurs, and then we had a merry time playing Pelmanism and "Little Old Man" until 1 o'clock. When we bade our host good night and returned home tired and merry if not actually bright. It was a very enjoyable evening - but these nights are getting a bit too frequent really. And one gets a bit dissatisfied with one's own billet, which is so hot and fuggy. However, it's better than some.

### **Thursday 9 June 1921**

Now that this hot weather has arrived in reality there is no doubt that work in the afternoon becomes something of a strain, and the

afternoon off, where one can indulge in a short sleep is a boon. This afternoon after tiffin I lay down for my siesta and was asleep in no time waking up much refreshed when my man came in with tea at quarter to four. His face when I told him I didn't want it, as I was going out to tea was a study. He hates anyone else to do anything for me, and doesn't allow it in the mess.

I went out to tea again with Dr and Mrs Cantine, who are going to India for the summer and not coming back until the autumn. They are going to do the trip to Kashmir and Dr Cantine has promised to give me full details when he returns. I have a great wish to do the same trip at the end of my tour, if I can get leave and induce my wife to come out to India. One could not do it in the winter, of course, as Kashmir is so cold, but in the spring and summer months there is no place in the world can compare with it, I am told.

In the evening I went to dinner with the Principal Chaplain of Mesopotamia, Colonel Hales, whose billet is next to the C-in-C's. The other guests were Colonel Morris, the D.D.M.S, Colonel Herrick, the M.O. of the big Hospital, Colonel Smith of the Graves Commission, Padre Webb and me. It was a most beautifully served dinner of 8 courses, even better than last night's and the old chap has a lovely billet and does himself jolly well. It is a roomy house on the River side with a balcony on the River, and I never tire of sitting out on these balconies and watching the lights on the water and on the bridges and banks. The stars too, are so bright out here and the nights so clear and when the Shimaal is blowing and the night air cool, life is not so tiresome. The Shimaal blows from the North West, and is a consequence of the low pressure system in the Indian Ocean which produces the Monsoon. Thus there is a flow of air throughout Mesopotamia down to the Persian Gulf to help fill this depression and the north air is cool. This makes the nights so nice and cool and everybody sleeps out on the roofs.

### **Friday 10 June 1921**

The dates are now growing apace, great bunches hanging down from the centre of the tree each containing perhaps 20 or 30 strings of dates, each string having about 30 dates the size of

small grapes, and green of the same colour and round. I suppose they elongate as the stone forms. The bunches of which there are sometimes 4 or more are shaped like this

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and a good tree will bear nearly 100lbs. of dates. The good strings are shortened and packed in boxes with the dates attached.

All Baghdad is up on the roof at night, where the house has one, which is nearly everyone. It is no trouble for the Arab to take his bed upstairs as he only has a thin mattress and sleeps on the floor in his clothes as a rule, with a blanket or quilt over him. It all rolls up into a bundle one could carry under the arm, so that when Jesus healed the man sick of the palsy, and said "Take up thy bed and walk", the man simply did what he had been accustomed to do day by day when well; rolled up his bed into a bundle and went home.

### **Saturday 11 June 1921**

I haven't been able to get my exercise this week, partly owing to heavy work and partly owing to engagements elsewhere. Exercise is a necessity out here and unless one keeps absolutely fit by exercise one gets flabby and liable to sun, heat disease, worry and other ills. Next week I must get out more.

This afternoon after 4.00 p.m. I went with Webb to the British Stationary Hospital and saw Padre Hutchings who is just getting better from a very bad leg - an old wound broken out again. He thinks he is going to be allowed to take up his work again when better, but if he gets through this hot weather successfully I expect he will be sent home. Stevens one of the Audit staff, who has been in the Hospital about 6 or 7 weeks with a damaged eye, has contracted Sand-fly fever and is in bed. Two or three bites from these virulent little flies may suffice to bring it on, and I was lucky that I escaped when I was badly bitten over a month ago now. I had 18 bites on one arm alone. I get bitten a bit still, on the ankles mostly, but not nearly so badly, probably thanks to my mosquito net.

## **Sunday 12 June 1921**

Up at 5.45 today. Sleeping on the roof one has to rise early anyway because the sun gets very hot soon after 6.00a.m. but today Holy Communion has been altered to 6.30.a.m. Mackenzie and I went, and the G.O.C. remained and read the Lessons and His Excellency the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox and Lady Cox, but a very poor congregation. However, I enjoyed the two services and was home having breakfast at 8.20!

The rest of the day up to 5.30 p.m. divided between writing, making passe-partout frames for my photographs eating and sleeping.

At 6.30 p.m. again to Church, and heard Padre Webb preach his farewell sermon - the best sermon I have ever heard him preach. Mr Toplis was there and we walked home together and discussed the Beau Monde Hotel, the 'Piccadilly' of Baghdad if all that's said is true. There are a fair number of Refugee Russian ladies in Baghdad and rumour has it that they are no better than they ought to be!

Oh, scandal!

## **Monday 13 June 1921**

This morning there was a neat little R.A.F. launch to meet me at G.H.Q steps and Irvine and I went across the River where an R.A.F. car was waiting to take us to the big Aircraft Park, where over 40 machines are stored. We had given them a bad strafing last year for having bad a/cs and being now assured that the a/cs were now perfection, applied for an audit. I found the accounts on the right lines, but not nearly good enough to hand the O.C? a bouquet, much to his distress! He was a very decent fellow and I felt very sorry about it especially as he was so sporty about it. Irvine and I had tiffin and tea there, and the O.C offered to give me a flight any time I liked. I'm a married man, however, and must think it over. He told me that they had no fatal accidents now and even if a machine crashed, which was very rare, no-one was hurt. I should like a flight, but dare I?

We had dinner tonight at 7.30 p.m. it being the last meal of Padre Webb in Baghdad - he leaves for Basrah and Blighty tonight. It was a merry dinner and a good one, and all the members of the Mess and the servants collected outside the street door to cheer him off when the car came. I went with him to Hinaidi Station and made myself useful finding his compartment, one for his bearer and luggage and so on. Quite a number of friends had gathered at Hinaidi Station to see him off and say good-bye. Punctually to time the train steamed out - 22.25 hours or 10. 25 p.m. - for Kut, whence he goes by boat to Basrah. In 8 months I shall be doing the same journey to Basrah, and then somewhere about November 1922 - for Blighty! I am exceedingly sorry to lose Webb: he was a Padre after my own heart, and I had got to like him a great deal. He had his ideal and his course of life, and lived up to it. He was a genuine and reverent clergyman, and a true honest, straight man. Baghdad is poorer for his departure, and I am poorer for I have lost a friend. I really do not feel much inclined to stay in this mess now he is gone, especially as I have had several offers to change.

## **Tuesday 14 June 1921**

These last two days have been rather cooler - the Shamal is blowing from the North-West. This continues throughout June every year, and then July is hotter - about 5 degrees hotter, the average daily temperature being about 110°. However, one is getting used to it.

We have got another new cook. The one we engaged a few weeks back borrowed 10 Rupees from me last Thursday on the plea that he had no money to get salad with, went out and got drunk, and then lay down in the Bazaar to sleep. Our bearers served up the dinner as best they could ( it was all cooked) and in the morning the cook turned up in the charge of a policeman and we had to pay 20 Rupees to get him out, or rather lend him 20 chips to get himself out. As he hadn't turned up to cook breakfast we thought he had bunked: and I got a new cook from G.H.Q who although boss-eyed, black and ugly, is a recruited cook and less likely to give way to drink. Our bearers are also getting rather

restive over having to draw our rations daily at the Ration Dump at Southgate, and so I have obtained a "bhisti" (pronounced "beastie"), really a water carrier, but we intend to use him as a food carrier. This ration business is a big nuisance. Sometimes the meat fails, other times the bread or the vegetables, or a short quantity comes. Then our Indians form a deputation and complain about theirs - the meat is all bone - or rice has come instead of atta or vice versa, or the ghie hasn't come at all. Then the cook has no wood or charcoal! The next day one bearer calls the other a sweeper, and the insulted one comes to his master for permission to fight the other. Then the cook gets drunk and serves up cocoa essence for soup! Talk about domestic troubles in England - they're nothing to those of Baghdad.

In the afternoon I went with three S.&T. men to the Sporting Club and played Lieut. Wayman golf. I was in pretty good form after the 1<sup>st</sup> hole and won by 6 up and 5 to play. The last 5 we then played as a bye - and I lost one, won three and halved the other. I had only had one drink, a ginger beer, since breakfast, and you can just imagine I did full justice to the quart of shandy-gaff I had after the game!

### **Wednesday 15 June 1921**

Still keeping cool - temperature under 100° and the nights so cool that I have to have a blanket on - at least I did tonight.

I was speaking yesterday about our domestic troubles. Well today brought its crop for me. My servant went with the bhisti for the week's rations of groceries re. leaving with a mule cart at 6.30. When Pickard and I got to the office at 8.30 we found Imam Ali waiting for us. The Baba at the Ration Dump had used most insulting language to him - and Imam Ali was most intensely indignant. So we went over and cursed the Baba and choked him off. An hour later Imam Ali was back - the bhisti had struck the Baba and was in Quarter-guard. So Pickard had to go over again and get him out and see the rations handed over and put on the cart. Imam Ali had not told me, in his temper, that he wanted to go back to his Depot at Basrah - his way of saying he was fed up - but he apparently altered his mind when he got back to the

comfort of the billet again, for he has been absolutely the perfect servant since - he can be a real gem when he likes.

### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

Today I finished framing my photos with passe-partout and extremely nice they look. As I look round my room it strikes me that it is a very cosy room nicely furnished with just what is necessary. My carpets look nice, too, and the pictures and Japanese panels on the walls and the long row of windows in front make it one of the nicest rooms I have seen in an officer's billet in Mesopotamia. It makes me feel quite sorry to think that our billet is to be given up and that we are to be distributed among the other G.H.Q. messes. A conference on billets was held today at which this was decided (I don't know on what grounds unless on medical grounds - it is certainly hot and smelly in this summer weather and rather noisy, being between the Bazaars and New Street). However, soon after the Chief had returned he sent in to me a draft minute asking "A" Branch G.H.Q. to take immediate steps to accommodate Pickard and me elsewhere. It was rather a bombshell, but with Webb gone I am not really anxious to remain in "J" Mess. So I told the Chief that I quite agreed and Pickard and I are now awaiting developments. In the afternoon, Goodrich, Horton and Long called for me and we all went up to the Golf Club. We played a foursome, Long and I as partners and beat the others two holes up. My partner was very out of practice and I only played well in patches. We did the first hole in 5, however, and several other holes in bogey. It was a hot afternoon and a long, long drink of shandy gaff at the finish just about saved our lives.

Home in a luxurious car, a bath, dinner, and then to bed on the roof under the stars. The stars are so bright here, and the moon is so bright one could read by it, and it is like sleeping in daylight. One lies under a mosquito net, and this gives one a feeling of security and breaks the force of the wind. Gradually the street noises lessen and all one is conscious of is the dogs barking and some silly natives far away playing tom-toms, probably in some Arab theatre. In the morning one awakes soon after 6.00a.m. under a brilliant sun and a cloudless sky.

## **Friday 17 June 1921**

Today the temperature has gone up again with a bang - about 110° in the shade I should think. The maximum heat is of course in the afternoon, and when I stepped outside my billet at 2p.m. to return to the office I felt like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the burning, fiery furnace. We have a nice cool serdab (half underground room) for our office, and two big fans always going, otherwise work would be impossible. The natives feel the heat just the same, and most of the better class houses have serdabs and some even have under-serdabs. All these semi-underground rooms have wide "chimneys" communicating with the roof, having wide flat mouths facing the prevailing winds - so as to get air down into them. Our serdab has **four**, and keeps wonderfully cool.

I went to see Mr Levack again tonight and he told me he was in Baghdad when war broke out and afterwards went to Constantinople. While he was away the Turks plundered his billet and took away all his books, carpets and furniture, not a stick of which has ever been recovered.

## **Saturday 18 June 1921**

Hot again - but I shall have to stop mentioning this, for I suppose it will be "hot" every day now until August is over.

I put on my buckskin tennis shoes this afternoon and I hadn't been playing long before they split right across the instep. The heat had dried up the leather I suppose and I ought to have kept them wet day by day.

Horton and Co. called for me to play golf - and it would have been nice up at the Sporting Club - but I had promised Mr Toplis that I would play tennis with him and Col. Davidson and Captain Rowbotham. I went down to the Officer's Club at 5.30 p.m. and we had two full sets and two "threesomes". I lost in both sets, but I hadn't played since February and didn't expect to do much. However it was good exercise, more strenuous than golf and that is what I want.

I had a walk round the shops of the Amarah workers this afternoon. They are makers of silver utensils, boxes, bangles,

jewellery etc. which they engrave and then fill the engraving with a sort of black enamel. The Headquarters of the craft used to be at Amarah, on the Lower Tigris but lately the best workmen have moved up to Baghdad, where they squat in their open shops making their wares. I hit on a finger-bowl that I liked and after a little bargaining got it for 30 Rupees. Not very wonderfully done perhaps - but a typical piece of Baghdad work.

This is a mosquito which I have just killed. ∞ They get me now and again but I manage to kill a good few, generally before they have had much off me. They and sand flies are the chief scourges of the country, but there is a tiny bug whose bite, if infected is said to cause the 'Baghdad boil' which everyone is said to get and which lasts 6 months, and sometimes leaves a nasty scar. Padre Marsh (in my billet) has had one on his lip for about 4 months already, most unsightly and very painful. Horton has 4! - one on his eyelid. Lots of the natives get them at one time or another but they are like measles, once you have had them, they never attack you a second time.

### **Sunday 19 June 1921**

Pretty warm but with a beautiful cool wind blowing out in the country. Except for Church I have been at home all day writing and although pretty stuffy in my room I have enjoyed it. This has been a busy week and I am astonished that work still keeps up to such a high level. I have got many rather involved questions settled now, though, so work might decrease - but one never knows what will turn up.

I found a colony of white ants in my room tonight. They had eaten right through a brick wall from outside. I have destroyed them, but I am told that Baghdad is riddled with them and there is no cure. Many a house has to be pulled down because white ants have eaten through and through it and rendered it unsafe. It is a wonder to me that Baghdad is not burned down seeing the amount of wood there is in the buildings and how careless the natives are. The fire engine buzzes by every night somewhere or other, but nothing serious seems to happen and the fire never spreads. I suppose it is a case of the devil looking after his own.

## **Monday 20 June 1921**

This has been one of those days when nothing has happened except heat. Perhaps I shouldn't say anything, because a cable arrived from the War Office saying that in view of the reduction in the Garrison of Mesopotamia, one assistant local auditor and four Heads of Sections ( similar rank to mine) need not be replaced. That is they would go home this winter and no fresh men come out. The cable finished by asking the Chief if he would stay another year. He was very indignant over the last request, which is rather unfair seeing that for one short period he has been away from his wife and family for nearly 6 years. He has refused. I'm afraid work with such a reduced directing staff is going to be pretty hard next year.

Went to tea with Mackenzie who is in 'D' Mess. His room is not nearly so nice as mine and not much more than half the size. I'm afraid that there's not much hope of getting such a nice room as this when I move into another Mess.

## **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 1921**

Yesterday completed my first six months away from home. Now who was the fellow who told me that the first 6 months would go slowly and then the time would begin to pass much more quickly? Because now the time has arrived for his word to be tested and I don't mind what speed time buzzes by. There's no speed limit and if Xmas was tomorrow I could yell with joy!

This afternoon I ordered a motor launch to take me up to the I.W.T. Coal and Oil Stores at Advanced Base, down river beyond Karradah Bridge. We started from G.H.Q. at 2.30 and had a fine run down arriving at our destination at 3.00p.m. It was a warm day but the breeze on the river made it nice and cool under the awning of the launch. The river has dropped very quickly since the floods of May and now at the bend above the Bridge there is a big island, which Arabs are already beginning to cultivate. It wants no digging being just mud, and I am told will give wonderful crops.

There are 5 or 6 Officers at the I.W.T. Depot and really lovely little bungalows they have - made of mud, but with walls about a foot

thick and therefore beautifully cool. Shady wide verandahs around them to keep the sun off the walls and the whole place kept dark and therefore very refreshing from the glare of the sun. There is a refugee Russian ex-naval Officer employed here and he has got his wife and two little children with him. They have lost their all at the hands of the Bolsheviks except their lives, and were very lucky to have kept that - having had a thrilling escape and journey across Persia.

We had tea with Major Wilson and left at about 5.30, when the Karradah Bridge is cut, for River traffic to pass through again. This time we were against stream and it took us nearly an hour to get back. We passed the Blossie Lynch, a paddle steamer up from Basrah, crowded with Arabs, men and women, Jews, Syrians, Indians and what not, a regular floating Babel. This was now the bathing hour and all down the stream we passed parties of men bathing - British, Indian, native and one wished for a dip too. When we arrived at G.H.Q. we were astonished to see the crowds bathing from the shore near by, and still more astonished presently to see a crowd of over 50 men swimming the Tigris. They all jump off Maude Bridge together, swim in a crowd, and land together just below G.H.Q. It was the first time I had seen this but I am told sometimes nearly 200 make the trip. The swift river carries them down a long way, but most of them wear a kind of wooden life belt and none get drowned.

Turned out a motor car and drove home, thoroughly satisfied with our trip and with the work accomplished. I had forgotten to mention it was a duty trip.

Our bearers and servants (we have 8 now to do for 4 of us) and the servants of all the other messes were paraded at G.H.Q. today to have the roll called. They made a great show in G.H.Q. courtyard, like a regiment on parade - the servants of G.H.Q. Baghdad! And drawn from every race in India.

### **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>. June 1921**

In one corner of our roof is a "chatai" shelter, made of four upright posts with a reed matting roof. Here I often stand after I have got up in the morning and watch the early traffic in New Street. Most

of the carrying in Baghdad is done by donkeys, who carry a sort of double bag slung over the back, each side filled with goods. This morning I saw a string of donkeys coming in laden with melons, big green melons which are grown in the gardens just outside and which sell for 4 or 6 annas a piece. In the fruit market one sees great heaps of them, they are so plentiful, and so they ought to be, water is cheap, and the temperature (109 in the shade today) is free! We have had stewed melon and melon pie, quite nice, though nothing to rave over. Fruit is fairly cheap just now - apples and plums and melons. Mulberries are over but oranges can still be had at 4 annas apiece. The young oranges are now as big as small peaches and a deep, deep green. Figs are plentiful, too, but still green and hard.

### **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1921**

It has been the hottest day today that I have ever experienced. The shade temperature (official) today maximum was 111°. The nearest one can get to it in England would be in a greenhouse with a similar temperature - but that, of course, is more a sun temperature and the sun temperature here is terrific. The heat literally scorches one's eyeballs and I must get some sunglasses, I'm afraid.

I had intended to go golfing this afternoon, but it was too hot and I stayed at home lying down until nearly 6 o'clock.

After dinner we hired an arabana and all 4 went for a moonlight drive "round the bund", which is a high road built all round Baghdad on the sides away from the river. It is almost an earth wall in parts with the top broad enough for 2 carriages abreast. This was really a most enjoyable and interesting ride and I must do it again in the daylight so that I can describe the surroundings and take photos. It is a 50 minute drive and only costs 2 Rupees.

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

If anything today has been hotter than yesterday, and the temperature near about 115°, just a little too hot for June. There is a hot North East wind blowing, which leads one to infer that the

Indian Monsoon has failed. If so, and the rains have been insufficient, there is danger of famine in India and difficulty in getting food out here, for Mesopotamia, notwithstanding its wonderful fertility, doesn't grow enough to support the Army in addition to the population.

The authorities are making great preparations to receive the Emir Feisul, who has been nominated by the British Government as the future King of Iraq. Triumphal Arches are being put up at the entrances to all the principal streets, the roads are being repaired and many of the shops are hanging out the new National Flag which is like this:-

[Scan a drawing in here](#)

I hear, however, that Baghdad opinion is by no means unanimous in favour of Feisul. Some want his brother Abdullah, some would prefer the country to be under British rule, and I am told the latter are in very strong numbers. The Arab of the desert doesn't want the British, however, and now that we are withdrawing our soldiers is beginning to get troublesome again, and will have to be bombed. But Britain can't bear the burden of Mesopotamia and is anxious to get Feisul settled as the King, which will relieve us of the cost of maintaining the country. There is a good deal of discussion in the Messes as to whether the scheme will work, and one often hears the opinion that Feisul won't last long. "He'll be lucky if he gets out of this country alive" and so on.

Although the day has been so hot there is a fine breeze blowing tonight and it will probably mean a blanket on. This one finds necessary although the temperature doesn't drop below 81°. As I sit here writing this I feel a drop of perspiration run down my chest (10p.m.) and I expect the temperature now in my room is over 90°.

### **Saturday 25 th June 1921**

I was very glad today when Williams gave out that the office hours for the hot weather would be 7.30 to 1.00 daily from Monday next. It is really too hot for work in the afternoon - it is very funny to see the chickens and the birds - especially the sparrows, they feel the heat, poor things. The sparrows hop about languidly, with

their beaks wide open gasping for air, as it were, or thirst. If one leaves a book or piece of paper in the sun for a few hours it will break up into pieces just like paper that has been scorched in the oven.

In the afternoon about 4.40 Horton called for me and we went up to the Sporting Club. We had an interesting game and I won by 3 up and 2 to play. I also won the last two holes. I think I am slowly improving and I must take my score one day soon. After we had finished it was very pleasant to sit on the lawn and drink and drink. Four pints I had - nice and cold, off the ice. And then home, tired yet contentedly to a cold bath, dinner and bed. I sleep well these days, so I cannot complain that the climate doesn't suit me.

### **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

My eyes smart rather nowadays. I think it must be the heat's effect on the eyeball and the eyelids. I have noticed in many officers, especially those from outside Baghdad area, that their eyes have a bloodshot line extending from one corner to the other. I suppose that in the glare and heat they screw their eyes up, only leaving a line exposed, and this is the part which gets baked and bloodshot. People also say that you keep cooler if you wear sunglasses in the heat. I must certainly buy some.

Went to Holy Communion and Matins in the morning 6.30 - 8.15. Very poor attendance at matins - 10 only including the G.O.C., the High Commissioner and Lady Cox. Evensong was very well attended, however; it's funny how an Englishman, wherever he is, does like to lie in bed on a Sunday morning!

We had three guests tonight to dinner, Lieut. Bell of the Tanks, and Irvine and Stevens of my office. Stevens has now recovered, having been in Hospital for over 2 months with his wounded eye. Very hot again today.

### **Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 1921**

***Temperature 115° shade!***

Today we commenced Office at 7.30 a.m. This means that we must now be awakened and have chota hazri at 6.00 a.m. Up at 6.30 and breakfast at 7.00a.m. As a matter of fact it is difficult to sleep (on the roof) after 6.00 as the sun gets too hot. The new hours make a long morning of it, but I am glad of the change, as it will enable me to get an afternoon sleep, which is so necessary out here.

I was done out of my afternoon sleep today, however, as a telegram came in the morning asking for an Auditor to go out to ZEUR, it having been discovered that the I.W.T. clerk in charge there had been selling fuel oil belonging to the Government. I had to go, of course, so I had to attend at the office all the afternoon in order to clear off the work on my table. This took me until 4.30 or 5.00, but I cleared it all off - which is a good thing off my mind. I could not give my best attention to the matter at Zeur if I had the vision of my heap of work at the office always in my minds eye. I seem fated to have no peace.

## **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June1921**

Yesterday I had told my man he was coming with me to ZEUR and told him to get all that was necessary ready for the trip. When I got home at 5.00 he had got all ready - my bed, bedding, night things, toilet things, tea, biscuits, whisky, mineral waters, lantern and I don't know what all, as though we were going to camp out for a week. At 9 o'clock he loaded them all on to the motor-car which was waiting for me and we went off to Hinaidi Station. Here we got a first class berth and he put out my bed - found a place for himself somewhere near and I went to sleep. I should rather say that I dozed for I had very little idea where ZEUR was and was afraid of going by it. There are no platforms at these desert stations, and no porters running about shouting the names of them. However, after 3 or 4 stops we stopped again - there was absolutely nothing to be seen, but I got out and went to the Guards' compartment and asked him was this Zeur? And he said Yes!. So I told him to pull the train up at the nearest point to the I.W.T Office and he went off to do so. Just afterwards, several natives came along the train asking for the "I.W.T. Sahib"; I said I was he whereupon they seized all my baggage and preceded by these thieves with lanterns, I and Imam Ali walked in the

moonlight across the narrow piece of desert which separates the railway from the River. The train had left Hinaidi at 10.00 and it was now 1 o'clock. Judge of my surprise when I saw at the River bank a commodious steamer, the "S.47", I had thought I was going to camp out in the desert and yet here was a beautifully equipped steamer to receive me! I was shown my cabin fitted with electric light and fan, and it wasn't long before I was fast asleep.

My man awoke me at 5.00a.m. with chota hazri and soon I was out on deck enjoying a cigarette, in the cool morning breeze, and gentle morning sun. A chat with Major Nielson who has been here waiting for me, a gorgeous bath, then breakfast and we were ready for the day's work.

The clerk in charge of the Depot it turned out had been selling Govt. fuel oil to civil craft at Rs.50 per ton, as against the proper price of Rs.200 per ton, and putting the money in his pocket. Half the proceeds he had given to another employee at the Depot, one Mohamed Kassim, and in this man's quarters we found an Arab woman whom he was supporting as his mistress. Hamilton (the clerk) confessed to the whole business, but Kassim would not. Another clerk, Hamilton's predecessor, was brought in during the day and he will also be charged, making with the woman, 6 prisoners in all. This was the hottest day, this day at ZEUR I had ever experienced. The heat seemed to burn my eyeballs out almost, but otherwise I was quite alright in it, although it must have been over 120° in the shade. In Baghdad the shade temperature was only 112°. In the afternoon I had a sleep in the roomy mud house of the new clerk (a most capable Indian named Deakter) with an Arab boy to swing the punkah all the time.

[Insert scan of drawing here](#)

A punkah consists of a wooden frame stretching across the room, hanging from the roof, and on which is fastened two thicknesses of heavy canvas. This is pulled to and fro with a flick and creates an effective cooling draught. It is almost noiseless. After tea we closely questioned all the ratings at the Depot but could get no information other than that already given by Hamilton. I took stock of all the oil and coal and brought the books away.

After a very good dinner we sat out on the deck, but my enjoyment of the evening was somewhat marred by the crowd of insects, beetles, moths, some ever so big, which came dashing in to the lights on board. As they dropped on the deck, Major Nielson's terrific pup ate them! There's no accounting for tastes! At 2.30 my man awoke me and I tumbled out of my bunk and dressed and got to the station about 3.15 (in the morning) only to find that the train wouldn't be in until 4 a.m. Someone got me a deck-chair and here I sat, in the dark, out in the desert, until the train arrived. Imam Ali put my camp bed up in a covered iron truck, spread his own bed across by the open door, and so we slept until we got to Hinaidi at 6.40a.m. Here a motor car was waiting for me and we reached G.H.Q. at 7 a.m. This was as far as we could go, for today (Wednesday) the Emir Feisul is to arrive, the prospective King of Mesopotamia, and New Street is full of spectators and closed to traffic. So I went into the office and did some work; but about an hour afterwards my driver called in for me as New Street had been opened. Feisul's train had been delayed, we heard, by a sandstorm in the desert and he won't arrive until 6 o'clock tonight.

### **Wednesday 29 June 1921**

Today has been a great day in the annals of IRAQ, for the EMIR FEISUL, the prospective King arrived today. He came up by train from Basrah and should have made his entry into Baghdad about 7 a.m. The streets had begun to fill about 4.30a.m. early risers picking points of vantage along the route. The whole force of Police were keeping the road, and all the troops of Boy Scouts were given positions on the route. As I said in yesterday's journal New Street was packed at 7 a.m. and my car could not get through, but about 9o'clock news was given out that his train had been delayed and that he would not arrive until 6p.m. The crowd then dispersed. The organisation of the reception were, of course, in the hands of Englishmen, but the Arabs had made great efforts also and Baghdad really looked Baghdad today. From nearly every house the National flag was flown, arches of palm fronds had been built, from every window and balcony hung carpets, some of them extremely beautiful and of great value. Not only the streets but the windows, balconies and roofs of the houses were packed, and

what with the carpets and the bright coloured clothing of the people, the scene was an absolute riot of colour under the brilliant sun. I say 'riot of colour' but it was really almost colour gone mad. The men in their abbahs of brown and gold, with turbans of gold brocade or green or blue, the women with abbas of every conceivable colour - yellow, red, light blue, dark blue, cream, gold, pink, purple, light green, carmine are some of the colours - and if you can imagine all of these colours moving about in the bright sun in a street the houses of which were decorated with red, green, white and black flags and with rich carpets of every colour of red and blue you can get some idea. Then at intervals along the route were stationed native bands consisting of drums and cymbals and these kept up a continual din. Here and there groups of men 15 or 20 perhaps packed together would raise some weird chant and then execute a sort of jumping dance moving backwards and forwards in a heap. The edges of the roofs overlooking the street all had their lines of spectators in brilliant colours.

During the day - the heat of the day - the streets emptied, and about 4.30 p.m. the populace appeared again as if by magic. I stayed in our billet which is on the route and had a window overlooking the street. One band was just below my window and others on either side and the din was deafening. The leader of the band outside, pleased with the presence of several sahibs, looking from our windows gave of his best. He capered up and down striking his cymbals above his head and then by his knees and the drummers beat in rhythm, many different changes, all in exact time. Now and again, water carriers ran in with drinking water for the crowd, which they drank from small brass bowls without payment. Mounted and foot police endeavoured to keep the line, but without much success and so the crowd moved forward and backward. This went on until 7 p.m. and then Feisul came. He was preceded by an escort of mounted Arab Levies which thus made a wide enough road for him. Just in front of his car were men carrying a brilliant group of flags behind them a number dancing the same weird sort of jumping running dance and then Feisul in a beautiful motor car standing up and saluting or rather salaaming to the crowd, which shouted and clapped, while the women set up a sort of joyful wail. Immediately his car passed all the crowd fell in behind it and the street was packed with colour

again pressing after the car. These passed the crowd melted away again as if by magic and when night fell the streets were empty again.

Feisul has had a magnificent reception in Baghdad. If he can only win the up-country and desert Arabs his election is assured. He is the nominee of the British Government and the Baghdadi would accept him because they, as a whole like the British but the desert Arab doesn't like us so well, because we endeavour to stop his lawlessness. But the opinion is that things are going well for him.

I forgot to mention that as Feisul entered his house three sheep were sacrificed and the blood sprinkled on his door. The carcasses were given to the poor.

### **Thursday 30 June 1921**

I'm afraid that my journal is a rather wordy one this week and today's must be one page only.

We have started an ice-chest in the office and I had two bottles of lemonade this morning from it - and wanted them too. It has been hot, actually over 116°F shade and the only way to keep the bodily temperature down is to perspire. This means one must drink. But it is not a comfortable feeling this perpetual dampness. It is cooler in my room than outside, a good bit, and yet as I sit writing my arms stick to everything and I have only a shirt and pyjama trousers on. When I have my afternoon sleep, my pillow becomes wet, and tickling beads of sweat run down my chest. But I get no thinner with it all, and except for the discomfort I manage quite all right.

Pickard and I have just come back from a sightseeing ride through Baghdad (after dinner) Many of the chief buildings and all the arches are illuminated and it is not at all bad for Mesopotamia. Long live Feisul!