

Saturday 1 April 1922

Just let me record it – 6 months today the RAF assume control of Mesopotamia (or IRAQ) and as soon as we've handed over to their Audit staff we sail for home. Home by Xmas!

At 11.30 Col. Dwyer called for me and we went down to the Base Ordnance Depot, where we met Col. Frith (the Colonel in charge of Administration) and Col. Keogh and again discussed the question of Makinah Club, which is heavily in debt to the Government on a/c of servants and rations supplied, which has only just been discovered. The place is to be closed as a Military Club (in fact, sold up) and we are to hold a committee on Monday as to the best means of doing this. Then by swift launch to Tandornah, where the three Colonels and I had a conference with Col. Ward, head of the Port Directorate on the question of handling charges for Army goods coming into the country. This settled, back by launch to H.Q. and then home to the billet to tiffin, arriving jolly hungry.

After tea over again to the Club, and had a talk with Marsh and then back to dinner at the billet. Our cook puts up quite a good dinner and we're not uncomfortable here, considering all things; but I shall be glad to get back to Baghdad.

Sunday 2 April 1922

This morning to early Communion, but the only European there, there were also two Indians. A black Indian Padre gives the wine. To the Office and read over my memorandum on yesterday's interview to Lieut Col. Dwyer (O.C. RASC) and then handed it in for typing. Afterwards with Nyilassy walked into Ashar, passing through one of the primitive groups of reed huts which so many of the Marsh Arabs live in. Muddy, dirty creeks separate the groups of huts and they live in what we should regard as absolute filth, themselves in rags, all huddled together at night in a tiny rush matting hut about as big as our tool shed – and yet they seem quite happy, being savages, its only us so-called civilized people who are unhappy.

In the afternoon, after tea, to Makinah Club and had 5 sets of tennis with Marsh and Dyson, played a bit better, I think and now feeling good enough to take up the game a bit more.

In the evening with Nyilassy to Church; just three there, us and one Indian. Not a very Christian lot down here apparently.

Monday 3 April 1922

This morning opened dull and it has been overclouded all day, with a dust storm blowing nearly all the time.

Up to H.Q. Basrah District at 11.00am to take part in a committee to determine how best to dispose of Makinah Club. As a matter of fact I was the conference for neither Colonel Keogh nor the Disposals Board representative had any useful ideas on the matter and the scheme outlined by me was the one accepted, and the negotiations for transfer, if to be made, are to be made on the lines I proposed.

In the Office all the afternoon getting out my reports on the committee. It was useless going out for a walk as the dust was too uncomfortable so I stayed at home in my bungalow and wrote my weekly letter.

This is a desert place out here at Makinah, any man who talks of the glorious solitudes and the beautiful peace of the Desert is either a fool or has never been in a Desert with its pitiless heat, its scorching sun, its thirst and its dust storms. Give me the glorious solitudes and peace of the green fields!

Tuesday 4 April 1922

This morning the Kut trial commenced when the I.W.T. Clerk Roy stood his General Court Martial. The witnesses for the prosecution were myself, Lieut. Langdon the I.W.T. Officer at Kut, and 5 River Boat Drivers, all Indians. My evidence occupied 3 hours and again (as at the summary) Roy did not cross-examine me on my evidence. I cannot understand yet what his defence can be.

I had tiffin at I.W.T. Headquarters, and after the trial had a walk around the Mess garden where they have all sorts of English flowers growing – cornflowers, sweet peas, sunflowers, delphiniums and many others. English tomatoes on stakes are growing, too – and all reminded me of dear old England.

After some tea and a chat with Colonel McMurray I came back through Ashar and saw a man with elephantiasis of the left leg – all swollen to the size of an elephant's leg and looking for all the world like one, the toes showing just about as much as an elephant's toes. The poor wretch could only hobble slowly owing to the weight of his awful leg. Truly this is a most loathsome disease.

Wednesday 5 April 1922

On going down to H.Q. Basrah District today with my camera, with which on the way I had intended to take a snap of an encampment of Marsh Arabs which I had noticed on one of the creeks, consisting mostly of women, I found that the camp had disappeared and the last boatload paddling away. There were about 40 of these boats altogether and at least 200 people – very dirty and half savages, the little ones running about naked on the land, while their elders cooked and lazed about. So when I got down to IWT Dockyard I took a picture of the creek beside the Officers' Mess, full of native ships, though not at present so busy as it was a year ago.

The trial of the Kut IWT Clerk is finished and indications are that he will be found guilty and get a stiff sentence.

Went to HQ Basrah District and there found the "Barala" and "Chakdara" arrive tomorrow morning instead of today. (British India Steam Navigation Company). So home to Makinah to tiffin and slept during the afternoon.

In the evening for a walk with Nyilassy, a drink at the Club and back to dinner. I have been so badly bitten during the past few days that I have put up my mosquito net over my bed for tonight. I found that this morning there was a medical order that mosquito

nets were to be used from 1st April, and I'm not surprised for the place swarms with every biting insect there is.

Thursday 6 April 1922

This morning up at 6 o'clock and down to Magil to meet Mr Toplis and Hudson and Irvine. The "Chakdara" with Irvine on board arrived about 7 o'clock and the "Barala" with Mr Toplis and Hudson about 8 o'clock. They all looked well, and so they ought, having been 48 days coming from England to Mesopotamia, with plenty to eat, no work, and a splendid sea voyage. General Fraser was also on board the "Barala" which took 13 days from Bombay.

I had breakfast on the "Barala" with Mr Toplis and then returned with Irvine and Hudson to the Billet at Makinah, Toplis going to HQ Basrah District. He came up to the Office about 10.30 and stayed until 12.00 while I explained to him the various jobs I had been engaged upon down there. He agreed with the action taken in every case, and has agreed to back all my decisions.

In the afternoon, after tea, went with Irvine to Makinah Club and played several sets of tennis singles, and thoroughly enjoyed them. Singles are good exercise and I'm improving at the game. Home and a good bath and then a good dinner. Nyilassy's bearer acts as a cook and cooks very well. We played cards after dinner, bridge and solo, and I went to bed feeling nicely tired.

Friday 7 April 1922

This morning down to HQ Basrah District and met Mr Toplis, and discussed official matters with him and other big-wigs. Agreed to get out full instructions regarding the Port question for publication in General Routine Orders. Afterwards to the Electrical and Mechanical Works Directorate for over an hour, discovering their a/cs, which are in an appalling state of chaos.

In the afternoon down to HQ again, picked up Mr Toplis, and went for a drive with him through the beautiful date lands past the village of Serraji towards Abu Klaf, the same ride I went on 20th March. The warm weather lately has brought things on a lot, the most noticeable being that the pomegranates were in flower.

These are shrubby plants about 7 or 8 ft high, carrying the most brilliant red blossoms. The effect of these among their light green foliage under the shade of the date palms, whose dark leaved fronds spread closely overhead, was enchanting.

In the evening, Hudson went off after dinner by the 10.00 train for Baghdad and I sat down and drafted the Port G.R.O. I go up to Baghdad with Mr Toplis tomorrow night.

Saturday 8 April 1922

Had a quite busy morning – rushing around fixing up final arrangements on certain account questions – and a conference at HQ to consider my draft G.R.O. which was approved practically as it stood. Said good-bye to all the Officers at HQ who have been very nice to me all the time I have been down at Basrah, and seemed quite sorry to see me go.

In the afternoon, after a rest, went with Irvine to the Club and had an hour and half's enjoyable tennis (singles) The bit of exercise I have been able to get in lately has done me a lot of good and I'm feeling a good bit fitter than when I left Baghdad. After tennis took Irvine to the RASC Mess and suggested that when Nyilassy left for Baghdad at end of April they should take Irvine in their Mess. They are a decent lot of fellows and agreed heartily, for which I am thankful, for Irvine would have had a thankless time living alone.

It has been the warmest day this year, I think, and I am glad to be going back to Baghdad. After dinner we all went to the Station at Makinah, and Joseph made up my bed in the train. Mr Toplis and I are going up together and the GOC's special coach has been allotted to us. The train left at 10.30. Loverock and Co. came to see us off. (It is difficult writing in the train)

Sunday 9 April 1922

I am siezing a moment while the train has stopped at an unknown station to write my journal tonight. Although hot today again, it has been a fairly comfy journey, for our large saloon is excellent and airy, with a sitting room furnished with easy cahirs and tables,

a bedroom with a wardrobe and a nice fan, a decent bathroom where I had a bath tonight – and separate servants quarters connected by electric bells. In their room they made our chota hazri, our breakfast and tea – and their own strange meals.

During the morning we played cards and read and at 1 o'clock the train stopped for an hour and we had tiffin at Samawah and a very poor tiffin, in a tent, same as when I came down.

In the afternoon I rested , but it was too warm to be much good and I was glad when tea came. As the evening wore on it got cooler and we passed by fine stretches of cornfield irrigated from the Euphrates and looking refreshingly green after the beastly brown desert between Ur and Samawah. We reached Diwaniyah at 6.30 and had a good dinner. An Officer of the Levies sat at our table and we invited him in our coach as he was going to Baghdad tonight (Foster) Another Officer was a medical man who dined at "J" Mess last April, just down from Suleimania, a cousin of Padre Alexander. It's a small world, to be sure.

Monday 10 April 1922

I awoke at about 10 to 6 and found we were nearing Baghdad, so up and dressed. Joseph made chota hazri and we had it while we were waiting for our transport. It was quite a cool morn, and rather windy, very different from the close heat of Basrah. Even when the temperature is the same, it doesn't feel so hot, owing to the dry atmosphere of Baghdad.

About half past 6 Rice and Heaton came up in a Vauxhall and we took Mr Toplis to "E" Mess and I came back to "C" Mess. The fellows here were all glad to see me back and made out that the Mess had been very dull since I had been away – so much so that they had passed a resolution that I must not leave Baghdad again without the permission of the Mess!

In the afternoon, after a spot of Badminton, I started writing my letter but everybody came and interrupted me and later on Padre Hutchings called to see me. He wants to get out the Church a/cs.

Had a really topping dinner tonight, the best since I left Baghdad and afterwards went with Rice and Middleton West to see Dr and Mrs Cantine off. They are going home to the States for 18 months holiday and as they've been out here 6 years they deserve it.

Tuesday 11 April 1922

Today pleasantly cool and not quite so windy. Did a good morning's work.

After tiffin we had our great match against "A" Mess at Badminton, 3 couples each side, each couple to play 3 matches. I was drawn to play with Heaton as my partner, but we did quite well and won our 3 games 21-5, 21-11 and 21-15. As a matter of fact "C" Mess won all 9 matches, and in return "A" Mess have challenged us to a match at Squash Racquets 6 a side – and that is a game only 2 or 3 of us have ever played. We had chairs and carpets on our wide verandah where spectators watched the game on the court below, and on another verandah, tea was served at half-time, or one could have ice-cream. After the badminton was over we all adjourned to the Mess room and there we all stayed - 16 of us – Heaton played, I and others sang – and all enjoyed themselves until 6.30 when most went. So we had a very nice afternoon party, probably the first Badminton tea at Baghdad, and all enjoyed it immensely.

I feel so tired tonight I can hardly keep my eyes open while I write this.

Wednesday 12 April 1922

Today a small attack of shingles developed on my chest extending from one side to the other. They are due to some stomach irritation – a mild form of Ptomaine poisoning – and consist of small spots which itch intensely and are yet very painful being situated along nerve lines. I took a purge to get rid of them and hope they'll soon go.

In the afternoon Rice and I went for a walk around the Bazaar and ended up at David Mashi's silk shop. He had no good cream Crepe-de-Chine and as a matter of fact trade has been so bad

here that many of the Jews who sell silk have been unable to replenish their stocks. I bought some pale blue silk at Rupees 5 per yard (6/10p.) after a long hagggle in which David protested 'by my life' that he was losing on the deal.

Today the English mail arrived and with it a photo of my Sylvie, a colour photo extraordinarily cleverly done and true to life. This is the most beautiful photo I have ever seen and I'm enchanted with it.

Guest night tonight. Felt very lively and sang all my songs and danced as well – got the party all round me and taught them how to make the appropriate gestures – great fun.

Thursday 13 April 1922

My Birthday – 41 today. Woke up this morning hearing a woman creating a terrible hullabaloo under my window. She was a Mahomedan woman and screaming out that her husband was a bad man and that she would not live with him and would go home to her mother. She crouched down by the wall and beat her hand on her breast throwing handfuls of dust over her head. She slipped away while her husband was arguing with another man, but he was soon after her.

In the afternoon played Waite Badminton but he beat me 21 – 12 and 21- 16. I came over bilious in the afternoon and I hoped the exercise would clear it off – but it was no good and I felt very rotten all the evening.

This was all the more unfortunate because it was my Birthday party. Waite had put up a ripping dinner, but I could not do it justice and in replying to the congratulatory speeches I feel I didn't do myself justice. They drank my health with musical honours, and afterwards drank the health of "Mrs Pearman, Joan and Sylvia". We had music, but I feel pretty rotten and went to bed at 10 with the attack of biliousness well developed.

Friday 14 April 1922

During the night I developed a violent attack of diarrhoea which has lasted the whole day leaving me feeling very weak and rubbishy tonight. I had a dose of castor oil during the morning, the first I have ever taken. I am hoping it will have the desired effect – I'm not feeling so bad now as I have done during the day.

I couldn't eat anything until tonight when I managed a little dinner – and I have kept in bed all day and shall probably do the same tomorrow. This attack has properly laid me out for the time being. Everybody has been in to see me at different times in the day and some have come and sat with me – Capt. Tucker did this afternoon and evening.

It is all very annoying. The servants have been playing football out in the compound under my window, the members of the Mess at tennis on GHQ Courts or Badminton just below me and I've had to lie fretting on my bed all day.

It has been very warm today and to make matters worse my ceiling fan isn't working. We've now properly entered upon summer and another 6 months from now should see me packing up for old England.

Saturday 15 April 1922

Woke up this morning feeling very much better, after a good night's rest, so up and dressed and after breakfast went to the Office. So had no sick leave after all – yesterday being a holiday.

It had been a very windy morning and the air was full of dust, but nevertheless 7 of us went on the launch trip to 'Devonshire' which Waite had arranged. (One man cried off because he couldn't swim, he said!) We were well repaid for it proved a most enjoyable trip. An hour's run in a comfortable motor boat brought us to the place which in reality is a large fruit orchard, closely planted with fruit trees – nectarines, plums, apricots, apples, mulberries mostly, - the fruit hanging thick on the trees in heavy clusters. I've never seen apples or apricots in such profusion. Huge rose bushes there were, full of pink flowers and the ground under the trees was thickly grown with all sorts of wild flowers and grasses. Myriads of butterflies there were, and a thrush, too, the

first singing bird I have heard in Mesopot. It was a treat to see this place so reminiscent of England – and no date-palms.

We had a nice tea on board the launch and left for home about 4.30; against the stream it took us longer to get back and we arrived at GHQ at 6 pm.

Sunday 16 April 1922

Up early and with Captain Tucker to early service at the Garrison Church – 38 there, 34 men and 4 women, which I should think almost a record, and would have been even higher except for the split in the congregation, the civilian portion having gone over to the Civil Padre now he has arrived. He holds his services in a room in the YMCA, but nothing so pretty as our little Church.

After breakfast went to the Office and worked at the new R.M.A. a/cs for 2 hours or more and got it out – it had gone wrong again while I had been away – I didn't like to have that on my mind over Sunday and Monday.

It has been very windy and dusty, all day; a hot enervating wind. Major West was going to fly to Kut Amarah, and Basrah but had to postpone it until tomorrow.

In the evening it cleared and we all went to Church – 4 to Rice's Church and 4 to mine. We had a nice service and Padre Thomas, who is coming as a member of "C" Mess shortly, preached. After dinner we had a little music, but as we are going to Babylon tomorrow we decided it would be wiser to go early to bed and here I am at 9.45 p.m. Lights Out!

Monday 17 April 1922

Easter Monday. It opened windy but we had arranged to go to Babylon and didn't intend that a little wind should deter us. Oh no! Awake at 5.30 breakfast at 6 and away at 6.20 by car to Baghdad West Station, where we got on board a Rail Trolley – 7 members of "C" Mess and the cook. A bit slow in starting but we soon got a good speed up when clear of Baghdad District – and going 25 – 30 miles per hour at the best. Between B'dad and

Mahmudiyah there is a good deal of corn-land both sides of the railway. More seems to be under cultivation this year and being prepared for next season. In one or two places the waving green corn stretched as far as the eye could see, both sides.

About 15 miles out we saw an RAF car standing on the road which there runs parallel with the railway and in response to the frantic waving of the occupants we stopped – and who should come running up but Lavender and some other RAF Officers from Aircraft Park; their engine had siezed up and they had come out without any oil! There they could have remained until rescued had it not been for our timely arrival. We gave them a gallon of lubricating oil and pushed on.

Just after we had passed Mahmudiyah we saw in the distance what looked like black smoke clouds as if the prairie was on fire. About here is desert for 20 miles nearly and we were not long in discovering what the dark smoke clouds were – it was a dust storm, a real hurricane with whirling clouds of dust and sand that whistled through the open sides of our trolley at terrific speed, got into our eyes and nose and ears and smothered us. The air was so full of screaming dust that it was like a light brown fog almost at times. The whole landscape was completely blotted out – goodness only knows what happened to the flocks of sheep and goats that one had seen feeding on the scraps of desert herbage here and there. I suppose they just cuddled down together and waited until it died down. We went on, tho' much slower, against the wind and with the sand piling up against the rails and threatening to cover them. To watch the sand storm in the 'Garden of Allah' at 'Drury Lane' is one thing – to be out in one in the real desert is quite another matter.

It was not so dark at the scene at Drury Lane but the dust and sand completly obliterated everything at times. The sandstorm at Drury Lane I can now say was a very good picture indeed – but the discomfort and hurt of it and the danger of it one can only understand when one has been in such a storm. This continued for nearly 1 and a half hours during which we did 18 – 20 miles I should say. Then came a rain storm for a few minutes and it cleared up a bit. We arrived at Babylon at 11 am and all went to the Rest House and after a rest took a stroll over the ruins. I

acted as guide and described the ruins of interest, but there was a haze of dust in the air and ones eyes got so choked with the dust that it wasn't so enjoyable as it should have been. One couldn't see far either and that was a great disadvantage because the size of the ancient city is a thing to marvel at tho' so few of the buildings remain. The old wall, which one can still trace, was eleven miles long. But all that remains is brickwork – all the best of the bricks having been used to build Baghdad Hillah and other places. Too lazy to make bricks themselves, the Arab used this as a brick-mine. Back at the Rest House soon after 1, we had a wash and then tiffin and a jolly good tiffin Waite had provided, quite a posh meal. We failed to induce the Arab custodian to show us the museum. He would not budge without a hookum (order) from Major Dixon, the Political Officer at Hillah. To convince us he finally said "Markum "God"? We understood. Well, he replied "If God came and said, show Museum, and he had no hookum from Major Dixon, I say go away. If he have hookum, all right, see Museum".

We rode back to the station on donkeys and had a very quick and comfy journey back home – ice cream on the way and tea – arriving back at Baghdad at quarter to 6, where our cars were awaiting us. Thus ended my third trip to Babylon, most memorable for the dust storm.

What a gorgeous bath we had at the billet and how well we slept that night!

Tuesday 18 April 1922

Eyes very sore and legs very stiff after our trip to Babylon yesterday – which was a pity as our return match with "A" Mess came off today – the game this time being tennis. Four pairs of each Mess each played one set of doubles against four pairs of the other. Heaton and I made the fourth pair for "C" Mess and very poor players we were, hardly ever getting any practice.

We started at 3 and at half time, when 8 games had been played and we adjourned for refreshments the score was "A" Mess 41 games and "C" Mess 33. Our opponents gave us a very nice tea – relieved with drinks and ice-cream without which no function is

complete in this country. I think they were certain of winning especially as Middleton – West, one of our best players was away, but after a most exciting second half we gradually pegged them back scoring 33 games to their 23, and finally winning by 66 games to 64. They had felt sure of winning and were very surprised at their defeat. (Heaton and I lost our four sets, but we scored 6 points which we claimed were those which won the contest for "C" Mess!)

Wednesday 19 April 1922

Nothing much happened today except that we heard that we are not at present to undertake the audit of the IRAQ Levies – which may mean that Rice's trip to Mosul and district may be much shorter than he had intended as he will have to leave the Levies out. So that he will be back sooner than we thought and I shall have to go earlier to Poona. This is a pity as the monsoons (rains) don't start in India until end of June. I wanted to arrive there about middle of June and then I wouldn't have to wait long for the rains and the cooler weather.

It has been warming up lately and one has one's fans going all day and night – but the nights are still nice and cool; the shade temperature maximum today was 92 degrees but the night temperature 60 only. It is 2 months yet before it gets really hot.

We had our guest night tonight. Col. Davidson, Mr Toplis, and Col. Fanshawe (the latter my guest), Major Shortridge and Edmunds of E. & M. We usually get a distinguished crowd at our guest nights and it is extraordinary how very nice these big men are when one gets to know them. All are friends out East.

Thursday 20 April 1922

I am picking up my new work well, I think. I am in control of the Cash Section now – and I must say I like the change rather. New work keeps the brain from getting rusty and the new knowledge will be very useful to me later on.

In the afternoon, one of the GHQ Vauxhalls called for me at 3 and I picked up Mr Toplis at "E" Mess and went with him to the Race

Club for a round of golf. He is quite a novice and I was out of practice and the two things combined led me to play a very bad game. I did 2 holes in bogey and one in one under bogey (down in 2) but I had several 8's and even one 10. I missed my drive at the first tee! However I won 14 of the 18 holes and halved two. Mr Toplis only won 2 holes, but he did better in the 2nd half than the first.

The Races were on and as the Race Course and Golf Course adjoin we saw some of the racing. We took 3 hours going the round and then found the Club bar shut – all away on the Race Course. We were thirsty too!

I had been invited to the British Club tonight but I had some writing to do and felt too tired to go. Early bed is the best tonight; we weren't in bed until nearly 1 last night.

Tuesday 25th April 1922

Yesterday Rice and I went into the Bazaar. The first visit was to Kerimss the Photographer where I found that my photos of Babylon were a failure – I had used the same film twice – an extraordinary mistake.

We then went to an Arab tailors where Rice was measured for summer suits – made of better material and a good deal cheaper than those we bought in England before coming out. Wish I'd known. Then to a jeweller's, where after a strenuous haggle I bought an amber necklace for 11 Rupees. It weighed 3 ¼ tolas (1 tola = 10gr gold) and he wanted 18 Rupees for it. We then went to another jewellers, Where Rice bought two fine agate studs for 4 Rupees (10 Rupees asked) After that we tried about 6 watch shops for a wristwatch for Joan. The Jeweller doesn't sell watches – nor the watch merchant jewels; each keeps to his own commodity. Eventually we came across a pretty little watch with expanding bracelet, and as Rice said that the works were good, we started to bargain for it. The watch merchant started at 30 Rupees. After showing him Sylvie's photo which struck him dumb, I got it for 23 Rupees. I then bought a photo frame for Sylvie's photo and we came home. This was dear, but the other things for cheaper than they'd be in England.

Wednesday 26 April 1922

Yesterday after tea, I played off my Badminton heat against Heaton and beat him 2 games to love. I thought he was going to beat me in the second game as at one time he had got to 18 points to 6 – but I gradually wore him down until we reached 20 all and then I got the odd point.

This afternoon a luxurious Vauxhall car called at 3 pm and Mr Toplis and I went out to the Race Club for golf. I played very disappointingly and took 104 for the 18 holes. But I won 14 holes and lost 2 and halved 2. I very nearly did the 7th hole in 1, laying my drive only 3 inches off the pin. Mr. T. took 17 for the first hole! And 162 to go round! But it was delightful out there – not too hot and a nice breeze blowing and it did both of us good.

In the evening we had a big guest night, sitting down 18 for dinner (including 4 Colonels) For 'Signora' I had 16 of them sitting round me in a horseshoe and instructed them how to sing the chorus. I showed them the gestures to make and it was the funniest thing out to see them all singing it, for all they were worth, while their gestures were a scream. It went down extraordinarily well and they all enjoyed it hugely. But I was very tired.

Thursday 27 April 1922

Rather tired after our heavy night last night. But everybody very bucked over 'its' success and full of talk about it at tiffin. It's very pleasant looking back on these jolly times, and a night like that does one a lot of good.

Waite and I are now the oldest members of the Mess, both joined about the same time in August last year. Notwithstanding that the 9 others are all newcomers we have shaken down wonderfully well again and as happy a family as could be. Even crusty old bachelor Harrison gets quite jolly and human, and cracked jokes.

Tomorrow being Air Mail day I wrote after tea and then had a little Badminton; but it was rather windy, which is a handicap. Watched

two Tournament Matches – I certainly think that we are improving in our play. We have two other Challenges from other Messes, to play off – also a challenge to tennis.

It has been very cool today and tonight one could almost do with another blanket. It is much cooler this April, I think, than it was last year in April.

Friday 28th April 1922

Still lovely and cool. Cole said today "If this is Mesopotamia, I could do ten years of this" Three months later he may have a different opinion.

The work at the office is I fancy dropping off a bit and that makes things easier and more enjoyable – nothing worries so much as being behind. I have done two good morning's work these last two days and feel in a controlled frame of mind accordingly.

In the afternoon watched West beat Tucker in our Badminton Tournament and after tea played Rice. I wasn't in good form and he beat me 21-17 and 21-18. I didn't give him anything like the good game I should have done.

Early dinner and afterwards to the Wesleyan Church to hear Mr Topliss lecture on Education. He gave a very good lecture – on quite original lines and had a splendid reception. He dwelt particularly on the importance of the influence which parents can exert not only on their children's education, but in forming their character. After the lecture to the Bilkerts for half an hour and enjoyed a talk on the lecture. I distinguished myself by being very eloquent on the Education of Love!

Saturday 29th April 1922

The great Mahomedan fast of Ramadhan has commenced, during which all the true Believers fast between sunrise and sunset – and make up for it at night. As a matter of fact it is not a fast but a farce. The Arab eats just as much as usual and simply turns night into day. He often sleeps after noon and has a jolly time at night. All the food shops are open - and in many cases the arab

craftsman gets over the 'fast' by the simple expedient of sleeping during the day and working throughout the night – for a month.

In the afternoon, Mr and Mrs Bilkert came to tea with Rice and me. We had a really topping tea, with ice-cream. They brought their little two year old daughter, Margaret, but she is not a very captivating child. After tea we played Badminton which the Bilkerts hugely enjoyed – they have both played the game before – four sets of doubles. It is nice to be able to ask one's friends to one's place and now Rice and I are living together we have made a very nice room of it.

In the evening played Bridge – first time for months and I made 4 Rupees – Heaton and I against Waite and Mr Toplis. Not feeling frightfully well lately so took half a tabloid of Calomel - to tickle the liver up.

Sunday 30th April 1922

Up early and with Tucker to Holy Communion. Quite a decent number there.

During the morning worked hard again at my Church a/cs and got them out to within a few annas – 2 annas to be correct, so I don't worry about that, especially as they are the year's a/cs and I had nothing to do with them for the first 6 months.

Then took stock with Waite for this is the end of the month and I must get out the Mess a/cs. So didn't start my letter until an hour before tiffin and completed it in the afternoon instead of sleeping. Then back to my mess a/cs and after dinner worked hard at them and finished them and got the bills out by half past 11 – or as they say in the Army – 23.30 hours.

This evening at Evensong the Church lights failed and we had to finish our service in darkness. However padre Hutchings preached a great sermon – quite the best I have heard him preach – on “Thy Will be done”, not preaching resignation, but just the opposite. It is his last sermon at the Garrison Church, as he leaves for England next Thursday. And I wish I was going home

with him. But there are now only 5 more full months to do – and then in October we pack up.