

Thursday 1st June 1922

Very much better today – so dressed and went to the Office. /went down the Mespers and verified that my cabin had been allotted on the S.S. "Zenobia". Also ordered the cars to fetch my luggage tomorrow morning and the launch to take it, and us aboard. Cleared up at the Office and shall be able to leave with an easy conscience after all. I am glad I'm going for some reasons, but not for others – I shall get a change and a rest on the river and sea voyages – and see India, but I shall be away from my friends, and the climate of Mesopotamia. I know I can manage – but India's I don't know. However most fellows envy the trip.

I was the guest of the Mess at dinner tonight – in honour of my departure. Toplis took the head of the table and made a very flattering speech and everyone else in turn had to add a speech. In the end I replied and while thanking them all for their generous kindness declared that I felt unworthy of it. They all said how they will miss me and as they are fond of music and songs I know they will. And I'm very sorry to leave them for they're good fellows all, and it's the friendship of such men which helps most to make ones exile bearable. We had songs and games after dinner and I sang as well tonight as I sang badly last night. Tonight has been one of the happiest I've had in Mesopotamia. I had no idea my friends were so fond of me.

Friday 2nd June 1922

Went all round G.H.Q. This morning and said goodbye to all my friends just as if I was going home to England. Ratcliffe and I got all our baggage on board about 10 o'clock and then went aboard ourselves. Owing to the late arrival of the ships manifest however, we didn't get away until 12 o'clock.

The "Zenobia" is a big double decked paddle steamer and makes about 9 knots an hour. She has cabin accommodation for 12 first Class and deck accommodation aft of the 1st Class deck for several hundred others. They are packed like sardines aft, men women and children of all races and colours and are mostly pilgrims, going either to Kurnah (where Ezra's Tomb is) or to Basrah, for Mecca.

We had tiffin at 12.30 and in the afternoon I sat up on deck and wrote my diary from last Monday. I have been so busy (and unwell) that I hadn't had time before. The ship shakes as the paddles strike the water and makes writing rather a job.

It has been a nice cool day today – so cool on deck that I had to put on my flannel jacket to keep warm. The reason is that one perspires very freely in

the heat, and if there is much wind such rapid evaporation ensures that one gets quickly cold – too cold for comfort.

We started with one large barge lashed to our starboard and when we got to the Dialah River just below Baghdad where the A.P.O.C. Have big Depot, we put in there and lashed on another a-port.

Soon after we came in sight of the ruins of Ctesiphon and owing to the extraordinary manner in which the River winds here we didn't lose sight of it until well after 5 o'clock. Sometimes we were steaming N., ten minutes after we were due s. again. At two or three places the river gets quite narrow, to 200 – 300 feet, and at one of these we noticed the brown sun baked mounds and ridges which mark the site of the ancient city of Seleucia. Generally however the country was perfectly flat each side, the surface about 8 – 12 feet above water level, and altho' still nice and green, very uninteresting. Many herds of cattle, sheep and goats were feeding and one sees little groups of natives sitting in circles threshing out the corn (harvest is now about over) and others throwing it by handfuls into the air for the wind to blow away the dust and chaff.

At 7.30 we halted at Sera and then had dinner which was very good. We chatted and smoked for some time and then went to bed. We all have our beds on deck, and I had the coolest nights sleep that I have had for a long time. At 11 o'clock there was a loud report. We had run aground and the hawsers of the starboard barge had snapped.

However, half an hour's hard work put all right again. Fortunately there was a good moon and we went back to bed, and on went our ship, pad, pad, pad all night.

Saturday 3rd June 1922

Some of our 1st Class passengers cancelled their passages at the last moment and we have only 5 now: Mr and Mrs Bell, Secretary and Handicapper IRAQ Turf Club, Captain Connachie, a vet, and Ratcliffe and me. Mrs Bell is very jolly, very athletic and daring, but not very charming.

We were all awakened about 5 a.m. On reaching the town of Bughuela, small but compact, but we went asleep again until our boys brought chota hazri at 6 a.m. Towns of any size are very few. One sees many more of the black and brown goats-hair tents or shacks of the nomadic Arabs who roam about from pasture to pasture with their flocks, or hire themselves out to the Arab farmers during the harvest season. But the whole country is very sparsely

populated and then only in the region of the River. Here and there, of course, the banks are very low, and during the flood season the waters spread right over the surrounding land, which becomes one vast lake, but if the necessary population were there, the banks could be raised, canals dug and the whole region brought under cultivation.

The River is very wide hereabouts, in places well over a quarter of a mile wide, and of a good depth. About 9.20 we saw Kut Town across a bend and at 10 a.m. we banked in and Ratcliffe and I went ashore for a stroll through the town and took a few photos.

We have three kalasies (native sailors) stationed right at the points of the ship and 2 barges and as we steam along they dip long rods in the water to measure the depth, and as this is deep water season their usual cry is "N'moosh may" - plenty water, in a kind of sing-song. But as soon as we come across a shallower part they raise their voices, giving the exact depth and generally the steersman has time to alter his course. Sometimes this can't be done and – bang goes the hawser. Then some excitement on the part of the crew, some energetic swearing on the part of the mate, a new hawser is attached, we back off the mud and on we go again.

It has been much hotter today owing to the hot scorching wind blowing from the Persian hills – the Pusht-i-kuh, which we could see plainly all the afternoon. They gave me a feeling that up there was pleasant coolness, but the mate told me that in the summer they get "red-hot" and the wind blowing over them gets heated beyond imagination. These hills are only 12 – 20 miles away.

About 6 p.m. We reached Ali Gharbi, a mud-built town on the Right Bank, but interesting because it is the only town for about 50 miles or more, on the Tigris. We stopped there with letters and then put over to the APOC station of Ali Gharbi, on the opposite bank. Here were stacked miles of iron pipes which are to form a pipe-line to conduct the oil from the new oil-fields at the foot of the Pusht-i-khu. There were also stacks of sleepers and nails for the narrow gauge railway which runs to the oil field. I have heard conflicting stories about this new oil field. Some say that it is a disappointment and that nothing worth while is being found: but I heard today that they are finding oil everywhere they drill, and that every boring produces a gush which is immediately stopped down awaiting the proper time to develop. Probably they are finding the oil all right for we put on shore a lot of machinery parts and woodwork. The APOC wouldn't be spending money like that on a wash-out.

During this part of the journey the country around has been getting greener and plenty of grass supports enormous flocks of sheep and goats. At intervals there are groups of black water buffaloes, who lie all day in the cool water. They seem to enjoy the splash of the steamer wash. One could see where the floods had been and there were still patches of water, like big lakes lying in the lower parts.

We sat up late talking on deck, and went to bed about 11. We didn't get an uninterrupted night's rest as we reached Amara about 3.30 (Sunday morning) It was just getting light and there is discharging cargo and letters and taking on new passengers and nothing is done in this country without a lot of shouting. However we got a little more sleep when we moved on until our boys brought chota hazri at ¼ to 6 – Whitsun morning.

Whitsun Day 4th June 1922

This morning Ratcliffe missed his dog – Chip, which he was bringing with him to India. He must have gone off the boat at Amara. However one of the passengers who got on there has offered to find him and send him on to Basrah.

Below Amara we enter that part of the River called the "Narrows". The river is deeper and the barge can sail right up to the bank, but it is only about 200 ft. wide. Consequently we bump from one side to the other (being 2 barges + 1 ship wide = 100ft.wide) and sometimes the bow of one of the barges gets embedded in the mud at the bank and the hawser snaps. This happened this morning and we were about ½ hour getting off again. It was at an oasis of date palms, by an Arab village and the girls and women came out with eggs and salt for sale, while the boys, quite naked, begged for baksheesh. The girls are clothed and altho' they stand side by side with naked boys their own size appear to take no notice of them. I got some good snaps of the scene.

On either side of the river now there are extensive marshes with lakes, in which tall reeds grow. These are cut year by year and form the material from which the huts in the marsh villages are made. These small groups of huts we pass frequently, and the children run out and beg for baksheesh, the boys as naked as Adam. The girls I thought were rather pretty.

This land also grows quantities of corn, now all harvested; oxen were busy treading out the grain, in teams of 6. Parties of peasants were thrashing, and some winnowing. This is, by comparison with the upper reaches, a busy fertile region.

But the effect of the great heat is that the whole district is one great steaming marsh. Imagine what the effect of 160 deg on water is. That's the sun temperature and one simply gasped for breath and sweated streams. There was very little breeze blowing, and what there was, was behind us. Our next halt was at Ezra's Tomb, the reported resting place of the prophet Ezra, about 40 miles above Kurna. Quite a lot of people got on at Ezra's Tomb which we reached at about 1 o'clock. One girl carrying a baby, on boarding the barge which was by this time too hot to touch, jumped about in agony as her bare feet touched the scorching iron, until an Arab threw down his kafiyeh (or head-dress) for her to stand on. Ezra's Tomb is rather a tumble-down affair as regards the outer walls, but has a very handsome blue dome. Thousands of pilgrim visit it yearly.

From Ezra's Tomb it was almost a straight run down to Kurna, which was our next stop. Kurna is at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates situated in the angle between the two rivers. Although marshy in the high water season it is extremely fertile and good crops are produced there. Kurna is believed by the Arabs to mark the site of the Garden Of Eden, and an old dead tree there is said by them to be all that is now left of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil".

We could see this old dead tree from the ship but in his anxiety to get a better photo Ratcliffe ran downstairs intending to cross onto the barge and get ashore for a few minutes as he had done at other places. He stepped off a form, however, which slid up and shot him into the water between the ship and the barge. He sank like a stone and was never seen again. I think he must have hit his head as he fell, we hung about for half an hour but could see no sign of him, so had to steam on again.

Thus ended tragically the river voyage which up to Kurna we had both enjoyed so much and it was with a sad heart that I went to sleep that night on board. We reached Basrah about 10, and it was a damp, steaming, hot and beastly night.

Monday 5th June 1922

Up early and dressed and soon off the ship, taking Ratcliffe's luggage with me, also his bearer Mahadoo. Transport having failed to turn up I went to Makinah in a Taxi, and on arrival found that dead rats had been found in the Audit Staff bungalow. So I refused to stay there and H.Q. Basrah District have very kindly allotted me a bungalow in their compound (H.Q. is now at Makinah) and made me a guest at their Mess while I am down here.

Reported poor Ratcliffe's death by telegram and letter, and after tea until 7 p.m. making an inventory of his things, and looking through his papers for a Will or other important documents (found no Will). Found a lot of letters from his fiancée or sweetheart, so I must write to her and return them. It is a sad, sad duty going through a friend's effects, making an inventory of them, and packing them for transmission to his relatives, and I have felt very miserable today.

The weather has been quite so hot today, but one day last week it was 123.5 deg in the shade. The heat has begun earlier than usual this year. However this Mess is cool and I have very comfortable quarters.

Tuesday 6th June 1922

Tonight is very sticky there being no wind and the mosquitoes are particularly hungry. In the distance I can hear jackals howling.

My rheumatism is almost gone, much to my delight, so I must go tomorrow to be inoculated against plague. All the troops are being done in Basrah just now.

Finished the inventory of poor Ratcliffe's effects and wrote to his fiancée. I sent all her letters back to the poor girl.

Rushing about all day, but very little work done. Wrote full report to Baghdad regarding Ratcliffe etc. and suggested they send down another man in his place. Until he comes I cannot get on. All this will delay my departure for India.

After dinner by car to Makina Station with my report for Baghdad and entrusted it to Corporal Spear of Military Police to take it to G.H.Q.

There are not so many flies about now. The heat is killing them off. The sparrows and chickens stagger about with their beaks wide open, gasping for breath. I wish the heat would kill the mosquitoes off a bit. Both the tops of my feet are absolutely sore where I have been bitten through my socks. I have put on two pairs tonight in the hope they will be too thick for them to get their beaks through.

Wednesday 7th June 1922

I have had a good bit of travelling to do down here and I must say the roads

are wonderful – quite the best in Mesopotamia. The chief main roads are tarred and make ideal motor roads – the other main roads – those used by the military anyway – have been made smooth after the winter rains and are kept watered. Everywhere here during the early summer there is water, in fact the whole place is one huge marsh, and the waterers work in gangs of four, three women fetching up water and one man scattering it.

The presence of so much marsh accounts for the swarms of mosquitoes. They don't like the heat of the day and only come out during the evening and night. One sleeps under one's mosquito net with the fan whirling full speed overhead. It is impossible to sleep outside, except under a verandah perhaps, as the dew is so heavy that bedclothes become saturated with moisture.

Mosquitoes seldom bite through white socks but black socks they make for as a matter of instinct I suppose. They are invisible on them. They have bitten my feet until they are quite sore, but I have now hit upon a plan to foil them, I wear two pairs of socks in the evening.

Thursday 8th June 1922

Yesterday morning at 10 o'clock I was inoculated with plague serum. Everyone has to be done about this time, for this is the season when there is danger of plague – while the river is high the plague rats can creep up inland. I took beautifully. About 12 o'clock my arm was hurting badly and became stiff, so that I had to eat my tiffin with my right hand. I wrote all the afternoon, but had to give up soon after 4 as my head was aching and felt muzzy. Oh, my arm was painful but I came over so drowsy that I had to sleep and didn't wake up until nearly 7. I bathed and dressed or rather, Joseph dressed me, but I felt too sick to eat any dinner. At half past 9 I had out the car and drove to the station with an important letter (to post on the train) and my poor arm! I didn't know where to put it to ease the pain. However, the drive did me good and when I came back at 10 Joseph got me a little dinner and undressed me and I had a splendid sleep.

I woke up this morning feeling very much better – arm still stiff and sore, but not so bad – and head all right. That was my dose of plague – but I'm immune now so Colonel Roch, the O.C. Hospital tells me.

Friday 9th June 1922

When I went up to the Hospital yesterday I thought I would get 10 days temperatures so as to show what the sun is like here already, in the shade.

Date	Max	Min		Date	Max	Min
29/05/22	115.6	80.4		03/06/22	110.4	79.6
30/05/22	123.3	80.1		04/06/22	113.3	88.6
31/05/22	122.1	87.1		05/06/22	107.1	80.6
01/06/22	110.3	84.1		06/06/22	109.1	82.1
02/06/22	109.3	86.1		07/06/22	115.7	87.1

Note the temperatures (maximum) on 30 and 31 May and the minimum, that is, the night temperatures on 31st May, 4th June and 7th June. The air is so humid owing to the marshy district, that it feels much hotter and the night temperatures above 85 deg are the worst to bear.

I shall be going around Basrah next week so I have obtained a sun umbrella to use. I shall take it with me to India, if possible.

Arm is almost well again tonight, so I've soon recovered from my plague inoculation. In fact, I was only ill with it on Wednesday – and lucky as some people take it very badly.

Went with Nyilassy for a stroll about 6 p.m. but the roads are too dusty to make walking enjoyable, unless one keeps to main roads, and they're too dangerous, owing to the motor traffic.

Saturday 19th June 1922

Further temperatures

Date	Max	Min			
08/06/22	115.4	82.1			
09/06/22	117.8	88.5			

Last night was very sticky I woke up quite wet and I am sleeping outside tonight as there is a little breeze - not much but enough to make it preferable outside, I think.

Received a letter from Mr Toplis telling me to shut up the Basrah Office and send Nyilassy and the Indian clerk to Baghdad – and later a telegram telling me to embark for Bombay by the next boat. They can be quite sure I shan't stay here any longer than is necessary – it's much too hot.

After tea played some tennis and at 6.30 Captain Grand R.E. Came to see me regarding some irregularities in connection with R.E. A/cs.

After dinner Griffiths, Ellis and I went to the Makina Club, which is now being run by the Civil Community. I didn't think much of the class of man there (mostly civilians) and as to the women, I thought they were just ugly. It was a very slow show and I was bored. Notwithstanding the heat they were dancing. We left at about 11.30.

Sunday 11th June 1922

Padre Jacques picked me up at 8.15 and we went by car to the Civil Church at Ashar, Basrah for Holy Communion. It is a rather pretty church inside and he is acting as Chaplain until the Civil Community can get someone out from England.

Spent most of the morning at the office and in the afternoon did some writing until 3 and then slept.

At 6.30 went out and waited for Jacques to pick me up for evening service at the Civil Church. They got quite a good congregation and many Indian Christians attend. It is modelled exactly on an English Church. Colonel Ward of the Port Directorate is Churchwarden and Jacques introduced me. He asked us both to dinner. His house being the other side of the River we all crossed in a motor-boat and arrived there about 8.30. It is a really sumptuous place as houses go out here and Mrs Ward has made it very comfortable. She was a very charming lady and sang several songs after supper. A Miss Thornton was also there. It was nice to be in a real home again, and for one thing I shall be sorry to be leaving Basrah as Mrs Ward has asked me over again and I shall probably be unable to go. Before our occupation, the house was a Turkish Hospital and is such a nice cool place.

Monday 12th June 1922

Today has been the hottest since I have been down here – over 120 deg I hear say.

I am now busy getting out the arrangements for closing the Office and disposing of the a/cs which are down here, and I don't expect I shall leave by the next boat. This and other work I have will carry me over Sunday, I'm afraid and that means I go by the boat leaving Basrah on 25th June. I shall have had quite enough of Basrah by then.

The insects have been flying about in myriads tonight. In the Mess Room they are particularly troublesome – they drop in one's soup and in one's drink and suddenly a huge green grasshopper flops bang on the table, or another thing called a "flying mouse" (a sort of soft beetle) hits you in the back. He seems almost blind in the light. These flying mice run aimlessly to and fro across the floor. They are too soft and juicy to crush with the foot, so they are just left alone, and while your attention is distracted by these huge beasts, the mosquito and sand-fly is pegging away at you. But I have found a way to keep them off my feet – I wear two pairs of socks.

Tuesday 13th June 1922

Today has been lovely and cool compared with yesterday, with a nice cool breeze blowing. Everyone has been saying with glee "Ah! here's the Shamaal at last". The Shamaal is a cool wind from the north which every year commences to blow about the second week of June and continues for 6 weeks. It isn't so marked in Basrah as in Baghdad but it helps to cool the nights and it is that cool night's rest which enables one to bear the heat of the day.

Went up to Ashar this morning but one of my tyres burst and after vainly trying to mend it the driver gave it up and I had to come home by taxi. Padre Jacques came to tea in the afternoon to see my portrait gallery. We had delicious mangoes and bananas for tea and we talked from about 5 o'clock to after 7 p.m. He's coming home next October and has been offered a parish at Sandhurst, not far from Aldershot.

Gave my cabin trunk to M.T. Workshops to mend the lock and make me 2 new keys. They mended my sun umbrella the other day and it is very handy having a place like that with skilled mechanics near by.

Wednesday 14th June 1922

Temperature on Monday – max 119.9 deg min 88.5 deg. Just a scrap under the 110 which I mentioned . The Shamaal is blowing again today and altho' it died down and left the night very close it was very welcome during the day. In the morning went with Twinberrow to the Offices of the Port Directorate and settled an awkward point regarding Delivering Orders and afterwards got the Railway Traffic Manager to agree to giving a free tally for goods railed up-country. "Sure, Harry, ye must have a way wid ye!"

In the afternoon wrote out a long report regarding the results of my morning's interviews and then had half an hour's sleep – my boy woke me at

¼ past 4 with tea.

After tea went round to try and dig out Nyilassy, but he wouldn't stir. Goodness knows how he manages but he takes no exercise. So I went for a walk by myself through some date gardens. These Basrah gardens bear the most fruitful date-palms in the world and I saw many trees which I should estimate would produce over 1 cwt. of dates each – possibly 2 cwt. hundreds and hundreds of strings of dates hanging down, already a good size, but still green.

Thursday 15th June 1922

Rushing about all the morning in the car, first to Ordnance where the C.O.O. agreed to take Ratcliffe's effects for dispatch to England, then to the Magil Supply Depot ... then to the Post Office and lastly to the Hospital. My business at the Post office is interesting and shows again how untrustworthy the Arab is, and dishonest. The policy in the Mesopotamian Post Office is to discharge its Indian employees and replace with natives (Iraqis) When my boy Joseph took 3 small parcels to dispatch as registered letters the Arab clerk charged him Rs 2/13/-, 2/12/- and 2/15/- for the three. I knew this was wrong and that they should not have been more than Rs 1/ 4/- each so I called on the Postmaster (an Englishman) and asked for them to be recovered and re-weighed. When they were recovered it was found that altho the clerk had charged Joseph Rs 8/9/- he had only put on stamps to the value of Rs 3/14/- and pocketed the rest – Rs 4/11/-. So he is now in custody and Joseph is to give evidence against him. This is a rotten country and its people are rotten.

Weather still quite nice today. The drop on Tuesday was only to 110 deg but the nights have been cool. Last night there was a heavy dew and about 3 a.m. I felt damp and cold and fetched out my rug. Been sleeping outside for about a week.

Friday 16th June 1922

This morning handed over poor Ratcliffe's effects to COO Magil for despatch to England. Came back to Makina, picked up my servant Joseph and took him to Basrah Post Office where he gave his evidence in the Registered letter fraud. I mentioned yesterday the Postmaster refunded Rs 4/11/- to me and thanked me for bringing the case to his notice. The parcels are going by this weeks mail.

After tea played tennis with Lieut. Ellis of H.Q. three sets of singles. He beat

me each set, but it was the exercise I wanted and I got it ending up wringing wet, as also did Ellis. If you don't get exercise one's liver gets clogged up and sluggish and one feels slack and drowsy. The Colonel and Griffiths had been out playing polo and horse riding is I suppose nearly the ideal exercise for a country like this. Walking is not much good. Last night I walked to the Hospital with Nyilassy and although I came home wet through I didn't feel freshened by the exercise. That may have been because for half the way the road leads through marsh at present, like a huge lake with date palms in regular rows – palms and water each side of the road as far as the eye can see. One feels as if one is breathing hot steam.

Saturday 17th June 1922

The method of watering the roads at Basrah is, I should think the strangest in the world. The roads are nearly all just a yard high above the surrounding marsh and built up of earth dug from the vicinity. The cavities from which the earth was taken are during the high water season full of water which percolates through from the river or creeks and this is to hand for watering the roads. This is done by squads of four, often all girls; three carry the water from the water-holes and the fourth scatters it on the road. The 3 carriers fill kerosene oil tins with water and balancing it on their heads climb up on the road. One pours her tin of water little at a time into the water-throwers tin and she scatters it about. They are paid 10 Annas a day. Many of them are rather pretty. All wear nose-jewels (a ring with a stud of jewels on it) generally a string of flat silver ornaments descends from the head-dress and many wear bracelets – several on each wrist, of amber or other beads. In complexion they are dark brown and wear their hair in a straight fringe on the forehead. Their dress is generally somewhat ragged, but one can't save much for fine clothes out of 10 Annas a day.

Sunday 18th June 1922

Met Padre Jacques just after 8 and went with him to the Civil Church at Ashar for Holy Communion. Quite a nice cool morning after a cool night. After breakfast put in a good morning's work at the Office. Makings – my new companion of the Poona trip arrived yesterday morning. He came down by train and I met him in Makina Station. He and his bearer have been inoculated this morning and when I went to see him after tea he was suffering nicely from the effects of it.

In the evening to Ashar Church with Jacques and after the service Colonel Ward asked us over to dinner. Went over to Tanomah by bellum to his house. The rooms are large and high and therefore cool. They have a rather

gorgeous ball-room. After a very nice dinner Col. Ward gave us a most interesting time describing an elephant drive in India and his exploits in the Persian Gulf stopping gun-running. He is a rather ugly little man but fearless and a clever business man, too. We didn't leave until after 11 and then I met some H.Q. fellows and they would go to the Savoy Hotel for drinks but I refused to drink and came and sat in the motorcar.

Monday 19th June 1922

Last night was the coolest we have had for some time – only 71 deg minimum and I slept under a blanket. Since the Shamaal started last Tuesday the temperature has only been about 110 deg max each day – a 10 degree drop- tho' we have had a few hot nights. Thursday it was 86 minimum at night.

Rushed about in the car a good bit in the morning and interviewed Strick Scotts (a creek in Basrah) and also the Mesopotamian Persia Corporation regarding delivery of any Cargoes from Ships at Basrah Port.

Spent most of the afternoon until 4p.m. in the Office as my fan had stopped and it is almost impossible to stay in a room where the fan is not working! You soon get wet through with the temperatures 110 – 112 degrees in the room.

After tea slept a while and then for the sake of the exercise walked with Makings to the Hospital and got last week's temperatures had a drink there and a stiff walk home.

Only 4 of us to dinner tonight the Colonel, Wilcox, Griffiths and me. Extraordinarily interesting conversation after dinner about war experiences – these 3 fought through the War and most of the time right in the thick of it.

Tuesday 20th June 1922

Down to the Passport Office in the morning getting passports for our bearers to go to India. Then interviewed Commandant of Police about poor Ratcliffe, but they still have no news of his body. I'm afraid now that it will never be recovered.

At 4.30 I hadout the Colonels Vauxhall called for Nyilassy and makings and went for a lovely ride out into the country, past Serraj's and for a good way along the Abu Klasaif Road. Hot and dusty in Makina it was cool and pleasant on the road which runs through date gardens and gardens bearing

all kinds of fruits. The whole district is extremely well cultivated and extremely fertile. We passed over several creeks spanned by wooden bridges and the whole road is shaded with date palms and other trees. The date trees are so close that they practically shut out sunlight from the ground below and yet in parts every inch of ground was occupied by grape vines, pomegranates, lemon trees, apples and apricots, or vegetables like beans, ladies fingers and so on. We tried some of the grapes, but they are rather small and not quite ripe. The pomegranates are not yet ready, the lemons were dark green and the apples small and not tempting. We often stopped either in order that I might take a photo or that we might wander into the gardens and test the fruit. Here and there side roads led off to mud-walled villages where I suppose the labourers on these estates live.

At the bridges or at cross-roads there would be benches and an open-air cafe where the villagers gather of an evening to drink tea and coffee.

At one place we came to a garden where were some fine clumps of banana trees, but the bananas were green and hard and too unripe to be palatable. We drove slowly the whole way and enjoyed to the full the peaceful, cool and pleasant country – such a change from the desert where water is not.

On our return journey we turned off to the left and came by a pleasant lane, mud-walled the whole way to Basrah city. This famous city is unpretentious, dirty, crowded and we passed very few houses of any size until we came to the creek which runs through the city. Most houses were one storied and many of mud. The best parts are decidedly Eastern in appearance (more so than Baghdad) but Basrah City – the splendid Bassorah of the Arabian Nights, was even more of a disappointment than Baghdad, and that's saying a lot. Got home soon after 7 and we all agreed it had been the best motor trip we had had in Mesopotamia.

Wednesday 21 June 1922

Woke up this morning with a sore throat, so after breakfast went to see the Doctor, who painted it and gave me a bottle of gargle which I have used several times already. One neglects nothing in this country. So I've felt pretty rotten all day – sore throat always makes one feel worse than one really is. Wrote during the afternoon and after tea went down to Ashur with Wilcox, came back and then for a very nice walk through some date gardens just by, to a creek, where Wilcox's dog, an Airedale, swam about for quite half an hour without coming out. You can just imagine how dogs love the water in this country. Sergeant Major Robins of H.Q. has a fox-terrier which dives. To show me, Robins threw a stone nearly across the creek, and the

dog took a flying leap from the bank, which is about 3 feet high, half across the creek and disappeared head first. He was soon out and asking for another one.

Guest night tonight. After dinner some went for a drive and some played Bridge – but I felt most like going to bed and did so.

Thursday 22nd June 1922

Not much better today – I've got it literally "in the neck". Had my throat painted again and gargled, no result yet. I expect it will take a week to get better, as it used to do in England. The sea air ought to do it good.

So I've taken it easy today but everything is clear for departure on Saturday so it didn't matter. The Makina Office is closed as from 24/6/22 and Nyilassy and Nair go by train to Baghdad and Pearman and Makings by ship to India. I think Nyilassy will be glad to go – he's got no nerve left and it worried him being in charge down here.

In the evening I walked to the Makina Club and there met Major Boyd and some more fellows. Later Captain Thomas the Vet came and we three had dinner out on the plaza in front of the Club. It was a nice night, with a cool breeze blowing and we had a very jolly dinner. There were not many there, but one can hardly expect many during the hot weather.

Came home at 12, gargled and went to bed and had a good night's rest.

Friday 23rd June 1922

Now that the River is falling and the Neap Tides are on, many of the marshy areas are beginning to show signs of drying up and that will tend to improve the health conditions of the place. This sore throat complaint is prevalent just now in Basrah and may be due to the marshes drying and the filthy residue getting into the air. Anyway I have a septic sore throat and have three hot fomentations on my throat, as it had swelled and got so tender. Had it painted inside and also gargled hard all day, so hope I shall be all right by Sunday.

However, worked hard all the morning altho' I felt rotten and have the satisfaction of knowing that everything has gone all right and that we shall all get away tomorrow, everything done that was to be done and the Office closed down.

In the afternoon I had been invited over to Tanorma to play Golf but I didn't feel well enough. In the evening I had my dinner in my room and after that had a bath and went to bed. So ended a very mouldy day.

Saturday 24th June 1922

Meenan (the M.O.) tells me this morning that my throat is mending, though it doesn't feel like it. Had it painted and gargled and poulticed all day.

Quite a rush after all getting out all outstanding letters and rushing round paying final calls, but everything all clear and I can go away tonight with an easy conscience.

In the afternoon after tea went up to the wharf where the SS "Vasna" was and took our bearers with all our baggage, and prevailed on the Captain of the ship to allow us to sleep on board that night. Our bearers had packed everything and it would have me frightful rush the next morning. Chose a nice double berth cabin, while our bearers found a place on the deck forward where to put their kit and sleep. Left them on the ship and came back, had a bath and dinner at the Mess and afterwards called for Makings at the R.A.S.C Mess and arrived at the "Vasna" about 10 o'clock. Had a drink and then to bed, but it was a sticky night though cooler in the early morning.

Sunday 25th June 1922

Woke up at 5 a.m. with the noise of the troops arriving to embark. We are taking about 600 in all.

Our cabin is spotless, in white enamel, roomy and comfortable. Although we have a fan it's bound to be stuffy in this weather. We have 2 square windows and my bunk is that wide.

Very busy until 9 a.m. embarking the passengers. Colonel Keogh came on to inspect things and was very nice when saying good-bye. Punctually at 9 we cast off and went down to breakfast.

What a wonderful port we made at Basra during the war. Many of the wharves and dockyards we built are no longer wanted but enough will remain to leave Basra one of the first ports in the East. There are miles upon miles of anchorage in the wide deep river (the Shatt-el-Arab) The only drawback is the Bar at the mouth, 90 miles away, which is formed by the action of the incoming tides against the down flowing mud-saturated river.

On both sides as we go down are date gardens as far as one can see, though in reality they are not very deep, and the desert is beyond. On the Right bank going down are many very fine creeks which enable maheilas and bellums to carry goods inland to the villages and bring away their produce, and enable the surrounding land to be easily irrigated. An hour's steaming brought us to the town of Mohammerah, a little way up the Karun River and as we passed the Sheikh of Mohammerah's Palace we fired a salute and his guns replied. This Sheikh's possessions are in the Province of Arabistan, South Persia. He is very powerful and has a considerable Army and a small navy – much of which we have given him to keep him happy.

We took aboard the mails, and steamed on. The River after here is rather uninteresting and each bank is just date groves with small creeks running up into them. The land is practically all on a level with the river and protected from high tides by a low mud wall. There are many villages, but they are slightly inland just on the desert side of the date gardens where the gardeners and shepherds could both reside.

We passed the SS "Frankenfels" but otherwise only sailing maheilas until we came in sight of Abadan, and there we could see four or five big oil-tankers waiting for their cargo of oil from the Anglo Persian Oil Company's huge reservoirs here. On one side I counted 30 huge tanks like gasometers and far away on the other side of the town still more. The oil is brought by pipeline from the Persian hills 250 miles away, where the supply is said to be unlimited. The town is a huge agglomeration of oil tanks, refineries, chimneys and pipes. On one side are the well built brick houses of the European Management and on the other, the reed villages of the Arab and Kurd and Persian labourers.

We arrived here at 12.30 and didn't leave until 6.30. Most of the time we were taking in oil fuel; for the "Vasna" is an oil-driven vessel (black fuel oil is like tar in consistency) clean and smokeless. Sir Arnold Wilson, the great chief of the A.P.O.C. (Anglo Persian Oil Company) came aboard here and has the cabin next to mine.

Had a ripping dinner tonight and am feeling much better.

Monday 26th June 1922

We have got in the way of cursing the climate of Mesopotamia, and have used every epithet we can think of and I am therefore somewhat at a loss how to describe the summer climate of the Persian Gulf – except to apologise very humbly to the Mesopotamian climate.

The climate at Baghdad is dry and therefore summer heat is quite bearable, at Basrah it seems much hotter because of the higher percentage of humidity; in the Gulf the humidity is 100%, that is the air is saturated with moisture and one lives in a perpetual Turkish Bath. And as in a Turkish Bath, one sweats streams, it pours from every pore and one is just so wet through all the time. The deck and the rails are always wet and although it is 120 deg. in the shade, nothing steams in the heat, for nothing dries. All the time, not a cloud in the sky.

We reached Bushire, the important Persian Port, at 9 a.m.; though one can hardly call it 'reaching' Bushire, for our ship anchored 6 miles out in the outer anchorage. There we awaited the motor launch towing 2 dhows, which brought the mails for India, and a few passengers for the "Vasna". From what I could see of Bushire it lies fairly low, though it has some low hills behind it, on top of which one could see a large square building. We stayed here some time and left at 10 a.m.

We have been in sight of the Persian coast all day, and very bare and uninviting it looks with its brown rocky mountain range running parallel to the sea. Here and there at the foot of the mountains one could see clumps of trees, where probably some water-springs exist and there were the small villages which we marked on the map, but which one could not distinguish even through glasses.

The sea was as calm as a mill-pond all the time, with practically no breeze and our ship went along on an even keel; very comforting to a bad sailor. During the morning Makings and I played deck tennis for a time with the Chief Officer of the O.C. Troops and got very wet, of course. Two-a-side play, as in tennis, and throw a rope quoit over a net about 5 ft. high. This is caught and returned, a quoit dropped or thrown against the net counts a point to the other side. It is simply tennis played with a quoit thrown and caught and returned by hand.

I have my bed made up on the deck, where one gets a breeze at night. Makings sleeps in the cabin, but it is more stuffy there even with the fan going.

Tuesday 27th June 1922

At 5.30 I am turned out of my bed by the sailors who come along to wash down the decks. The first water is from a big hose and then they cast sand all over. A gang of men then rub it down using half coconut shells of a very

thick type for rubbing stones. When these have finished it is all washed down again. Our sailors are all Lascars, a dark brown under-sized lot of skeletons dressed in blue shirts and shorts, with a red waistband and a small flat white cap. The deck scrubbers are exactly like a group of dressed monkeys as they work along the deck, in a squatting position. They squat on their heels and walk along like that as they scrub, never standing up until they are finished.

Today has if anything been stickier even than yesterday, especially during the morning. Makings and I did a little work, but it was too hot to do anything serious and we chucked it at 12 noon.

We had got up a sweep – Rs.2 a ticket, I had two and at 12 o'clock the mileage done during the day ending at 12 was posted up. It proved to be 307 miles – one of my tickets was for 305, not quite good enough.

We played deck tennis for a while before tiffin and after tiffin, slept. Woke at 4 to find that the sea had become quite rough. We were now nearing the Straits of Ormuz, which are only 11 miles wide and could see the land on either side – Persia on our left – Arabia on our right. One could see no sign of habitation, however, on these jagged precipitous rocks, though here and there was a small sailing vessel which was probably employed on the coasting trade.

We passed through the Straits at 5 p.m. On the Arabian side nothing but scorched, jagged, rocky mountains, extending spur after spur into the haze of the setting sun. Once through we were in calm water again, protected no doubt by the high mountains of Oman – 4000 to 7000ft. high. The temperature began to fall and we were all grateful for the pleasant change. It was nice and cool at dinner, and as a little breeze got up I congratulated myself on the change of weather.

Had a good dinner and after writing up my journal returned to bed, as usual, on deck little knowing, poor thing, what I was going to be like on the morrow.

Friday 30 June 1922

I cannot remember whether during those four stormy days in December 1920 when I was crossing the Bay of Biscay in the old "Huntsgreen", I managed to write my journal. I have certainly just passed through three days crossing the Indian Ocean when I didn't. Here is a text from the Times of India of 1st July (I am writing this on Saturday):-

"The Captain of the SS "Morea", outward bound with London Mails of 15 June, reports having encountered a very heavy Monsoon after leaving Aden, with exceptionally high seas".

Well, that is what the "Vasna" sailed into on Wednesday morning and the storm raged without cessation until we got into Bombay harbour at 4 a.m. Saturday morning. I got up on Wednesday morning feeling brave enough and had my bath and shaved, but that was the end of it. No amount of effort, however hard, will alter my make-up. I just couldn't stand and so after having brought up my chota hazri and everything else near my stomach, I retired to my bunk and there I have stayed these three days. The "Vasna" encountered the storm on her starboard (she was sailing East, and the storm blowing from the South) and not being a very large vessel and having little cargo in her hold she just rolled from side to side until one wondered (foolishly looking out) why the sea didn't come pouring through one's porthole and the next minute almost hoped that it would!

So what is there to write of in 3 days like that? When I looked out through my cabin window one saw nothing but dark green seas – the sky being overclouded – and now and again we passed through a heavy shower and I got up occasionally to replace something that had fallen flying from its place, or I held on to the side of my bunk to keep from falling off or shoved myself with my elbows the other side to save being bumped against the wall.

To make me more miserable I developed an attack of prickly heat, which made my back feel as if I had fallen naked into a bed of nettles. However I read most of the time and eat a little food at each meal and shaved and so on – and by keeping on my back avoided the acutest miseries of seasickness. The Indians on the boat were very ill and lay about on the decks like dead things. Well, I now know what the Monsoon is like, anyhow.