

Wednesday 1st November 1922

November at last. Now I'm in my last month at Baghdad, I hope. Work is decreasing, and so far as I can see I ought to have no difficulty in getting away on 1st December.

This afternoon Toplis, Padre Thomas, Barkham and I went up to Golf, the last time we four shall play together, as Toplis and Barkham go home tomorrow. There was a cool North breeze blowing, and it was very pleasant indeed at the Race Club. When I say North breeze, imagine how pleasant a gentle North wind would be when the sun is shining brilliantly, not a cloud anywhere, and the thermometer at 90 deg. I did pretty well except for three holes – the 1st, 8th, 9th – for the other 9 I only took 41. I took 23 for the other 3 – total 64 – but I won both on strokes and holes (won 5 and half) And then a comfortable shandy on the Club lawn and home by 6 p.m.

Wrote in my room both before and after dinner while the others played bridge – and also got out the Mess accounts. Thus occupied until after 11 p.m. And then, tired, to bed.

[Tuesday 2nd November to Wednesday 8th November are unfortunately missing from the Journal.](#)

Thursday 9th November 1922

I forgot to mention that as I was dressing for Golf yesterday afternoon, one of our regular carpet dealers came in with some carpets. He was hard up for money and he saw I was just going out; and as a result I bought another carpet, a very taking little Shirwan, for which I only paid Rs.45. It is a bargain, I think, as Ali Akbar, another dealer, priced it today at Rs.75.

Guest night tonight rather poor. Couldn't get the right atmosphere at all. Sang, but didn't enjoy it very much.

Friday 10th November 1922

Very busy at the Office, but didn't do as well as I could have wished – too many callers.

This afternoon at 4 p.m. Mr and Mrs Bilkert came and played Badminton. Had four sets all very enjoyable. Afterwards tea in the Mess Room and a few songs.

Colonel Roche of Basrah Military Hospital is staying here. After dinner we all went to the National Cinema, where we enjoyed a quite good show - "Red Ace Mine", "After the Storm" and "Zigoto as the Grocer". The latter was very funny and I had a good laugh. It is much warmer again today.

Saturday 11th November 1922

Armistice Day. Being a holiday, three of the Exchequer and Audit men, Armstrong, Case and Craig, had conceived the idea of going to the Shiah holy city of Kerbela, 60 miles from Baghdad, and had invited me to join the party.

We started from the billet at 20 past 6 in the morning by car and left Baghdad West by the 7 a.m. train for Museiyib. This line caters mainly for pilgrims going to Kerbela, and it is said that in one year between 3 – 500,000 pilgrims visit Kerbela.

The railway passes through Mahmudiyah, and leaves the main line at Mufrag, Iskanderiyah being the first place (and in fact the only place) of importance between Mufrag and Museiyib. From Iskanderiyah the line runs parallel with the Museiyib road and we passed many pilgrim caravans in country carts drawn by 3 or 4 horses abreast, or on donkeys, or on foot. They are mostly Persians, some of the women wear white veils over their faces with netted holes for the eyes.

Approaching Museiyib the railway cuts through the banks of old canals, now ruined and dry – the remnants of a time when the whole country was a network of canals and cultivated from river to river.

We arrived at Museiyib soon after eleven, only to find that the transport we had ordered was not provided, owing to a mistake on the part of the Railway people at Baghdad telegraphing that we were arriving on Sunday instead of Saturday. Just when we were despairing of arranging suitable transport except to go by arabana (native cart) 2 cars came up – sent from Kerbela by the Mutasarrif or Governor of the town, who had been advised of our coming by the Ministry of Interior at Baghdad.

Our road led through the interesting Arab town of Museiyib, and over the Euphrates by a bridge of boats, a very rickety affair. The desert commenced about a mile the other side and the road, like most desert roads, good in parts was very bad in others – thick with dust and very bumpy. As far as the eye could see was a long string of pilgrims returning from Kerbela – in parties varying from ten to thirty or forty, on foot, on horses, on donkeys; the women very often riding two on a horse, each in a kind of basket slung on

either side of the animal. In some parties the women were riding in front – being thus enabled to ride with lifted veils, as the men were riding behind. It was a sight to see, these Shiah pilgrims on the Pilgrim Road.

The last six miles or so, the road lay along the Huseiniyeh Canal, which runs from the Euphrates to Kerbela and provides water for the Kerbela district which is well cultivated. We ran through date gardens and fruit gardens, but the road was very bad, full of bumps and in parts inches deep in dust. We crossed the canal by a quaint looking bridge and thus in Kerbela City, to the Mutasarrif's house. His name is Abdul Aziz, a good-looking man of 35-40, and the most agreeable person, who greeted us most courteously. The Divisional Advisor of Hillah, Major Longrigg and his wife, were staying with the Mutasarrif. The greeting formalities over (these lasted some time) we sat down to a fine lunch, about 2 o'clock. We sat at a table to our great disappointment, but the food was cooked in Arab fashion and consisted of Arab dishes. Fish fried in some sort of sweet oil, brinjal with a sauce made of sour cream and so on, with khubez instead of bread and black Arab coffee at the end. At the end of the meal the Mutasarrif, who had been hovering about, apologised (through an interpreter) for the unworthy meal he had given us but hoped we would forgive him. We said we had had a grand lunch and much nicer than we had even hoped for etc. etc.

We were then conducted to the Guest house where we washed – i.e. water was poured over our hands by a negro servant and a little into our cupped hands to lave our faces – Arab fashion. The floors and balcony of the guest house were covered with carpets, and they were evidently intended to do us great honour.

Afterwards we were "conducted" round the city by an English speaking guide named Saleh Effendi. An Inspector of Police walked with us – 2 police walked in front and 2 behind. In this pompous cavalcade we toured round the bazaars etc. but were never allowed to halt near any gates of the Mosques, or to take a photo except at such a distance that it was useless. And the Mosques are what we came to see. Here are buried Imam Husein, the son of Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet and Imam Abbas, the half brother of Husein)

The Mosques built over their resting places are fabulously rich. The dome and minarets of Husein's tomb are plated with pure gold and in one glimpse of the central building inside Abbas' mosque which I got, I saw that the walls of the building were also covered with plates of gold.

Kerbela is the holiest of all the Shiah holy places and the Shiahs will not

permit a Christian access to the shrines. Why they are so jealous and fanatical I cannot understand, unless they fear that we shall acquire some merit (to which we have no right) by looking at their holy mosques. At the doors were the familiar brass chains which the pilgrim kissed as he went in and out. I imagine that the chain is to force the worshipper to bow his head as he enters.

Kerbela is a big city with well built bazaars wide, high and clean, better than those of Baghdad but many of the houses in the streets were in a ruinous state. We were very disappointed at not seeing the Mosques. The Mosque of Husein has seven gates each with its chain polished by the lips of the devotees, and each one we should have liked to photograph but were not allowed to. We were just like a lot of prisoners out for exercise, carefully shepherded away from all danger; but I do not believe any danger existed and if they had left us without any guard we would have been quite safe and seen a lot more.

We came back to the Guest House as it grew dark and sat smoking and drinking until dinner time. The Mudir (or Commandant) of Police, a pleasant fellow who spoke English, had dinner with us, no doubt deputed by the Mutasarrif. It was another good meal – but we were very amused at the way the Mudir and the servants talked and cracked jokes together. During the courses the servants lit cigarettes and drank minerals, after which they belched. It is a democratic country – this.

After dinner the Mudir went, and we played Bridge in our comfortable anteroom. The whole of the front opened (three double doors) on to the verandah and the fresh desert night air was delightful.

But the night was spoilt by the dogs and jackals who barked and howled, by the owls, who screeched, donkeys who brayed, cats who fought, and even came in our rooms and stole our food. I slept alright, but the others didn't. We had no sheets or blankets to cover ourselves with, but just an Arab quilt, warm but comfortable. Although the day time had been much hotter than for some days past the night turned cold and the quilt was good – but the Arab uses this sort of quilt even in the hot days of summer.

Sunday 12th November 1922

We arose somewhere about 6.30 and at 7.30 were quite ready for breakfast. Chota hazri came then, however, (tea and toast) and just when we were fearing that there would be nothing before lunch, breakfast was announced. Completely different food and finishing up with peaches preserved in honey,

and scalded cream. The Mutasarrif came and sat with us, but all we can do is to smile and nod to him as we don't understand what he says, nor he what we say.

There was time for a short stroll around the bazaar again but we were still not permitted to delay around the doors of the Mosques. Parties of pilgrims are still coming in.

We called at the Police Barracks to see the Mudir – the police struck us as very efficient and the place very clean, unlike the usual Arab quarters. Here we had coffee all round and bade the Mudir good-bye. Then to the Mutasarrif's where we had coffee again (no ceremony is complete without coffee) and then bade him good-bye. At 10.30 we entered our cars and set off back to Museiyib, having thanked the Mutasarrif very gratefully for the trouble and kindness he had shewn, while he expressed himself as greatly honoured by our visit.

As we crossed the canal by the bridge, the turtles sunning themselves on the banks jumped into the water with fright, but soon came back. The Ford car is certainly an ideal car for the desert. We were jolted and shaken and slammed for 6 miles until we reached the desert and only retained our places in the car by holding on with both hands. Soon after we had entered the desert our left hind wheel came off and went running away at 20 miles per hour, while we hung on like grim death. However the wheel was recaptured, soon put on again and away we went. By the way, the desert is not brown, but white, or nearly so.

The huge old Arab fort called Khan 'Atiq was passed and for over an hour we plugged on through the desert and reached Museiyib at 12.30. Having plenty of time we decided to go to see the famous Hindiyeah Barrage, 6 miles downstream. One third of it proved to be under repair or alteration, but I walked across it and had a good view of this stupendous piece of engineering. It is 275 ft. long and stretches from bank to bank of the Euphrates. It has 36 arches with sluices by means of which the flow of water is regulated so as to leave enough depth of water above the Barrage to fill the canals. Beforehand these canals went dry in the low-water season, which now have an ample supply of water the whole year round; while the Hillah branch of the Euphrates which bifurcates $\frac{1}{4}$ mile below is also supplied with water, which formerly dried up in summer. There is some talk of strengthening the barrage sufficiently to allow trains to run over it and build a railway line to Kerbela for the pilgrim traffic. This would be the most paying proposition in the Iraq Railways.

We caught the 2.00 p.m. Train from Museiyib to Baghdad, and had our lunch on it, and did it justice too. We arrived at Baghdad at 5.30 p.m. 15 minutes before time, and found our car awaiting us. So we were home by 6 o'clock tired and dusty, but perfectly delighted with our journey and experiences. We have seen a most interesting bit of country, experienced Arab hospitality, and seen next to nothing of the places he wanted us not to see. The Mutasarrif seemed surprised that we didn't see the Mosque, but there's no doubt, for all his surprise, that it was by his orders that we were kept away from them. Nevertheless, we all were glad we went and thoroughly enjoyed our trip.

Monday 13th November 1922

Worked hard morning and afternoon. It is only by putting in extra time that I can keep pace with the work. Cole came out of hospital on Saturday having been in a week – and is back to work today, for which I am thankful. He is now living in "C" Mess. They tell me there were a few drops of rain on the Saturday night – also a few more drops this afternoon, but that's probably because I have a bet of Rs. 10 that it won't rain before the 15th.

Tuesday 14th November 1922

Same as yesterday as regards work. After tea went for a walk with Harrison. Met the King (Feisul) in his car. He looks pale and miserable. So should I if I had his job.

Wednesday 15th November 1922

Same as yesterday as regards work. Still, one month from today I'm certain to be on my way to Basrah. They can't keep me after that. I'm keeping fit, but rather short of exercise. However, now the cooler weather is here, one doesn't need so much exercise – which is just as well under the circumstances. No other news, except that Buddoos are busy.

Thursday 16th November 1922

The Amarah silversmith who is making me a photo frame is very slow in completing it. He hadn't started it when I called again today, the scoundrel. I suppose he gets better prices for what he is doing for other people and so I have to wait. I continued my walk around the Bazaar trying to buy a camel bell for McNeill, but couldn't find one. One man who I know can get them wanted Rs. 20 for one, but I wouldn't pay more than Rs.10 I expect I shall get one for Rs.10 eventually, but I have only three more weeks to buy any

outstanding articles that I want. I also went into the copper Bazaar to try and buy two copper water-bottles, like the Arab women use for carrying water from the river but smaller, but couldn't find any. One coppersmith offered to make them for Rs.10 each but I would only pay Rs.6 each. So nothing doing at present.

Guest night tonight, Lt. Col Bilderbeck was my guest and we had a very jolly evening. He is the late Regimental Paymaster and goes home on 3rd. December. Sang several songs and finished up soon after 12 midnight.

Beautiful day – max temperature about 80 deg. and at night 50 deg.

Friday 17th November 1922

Not feeling very well today. Headache all the morning (it may have been due to last night!) So felt worried at the continued influx of work especially as I don't seem to keep pace with it.

After tiffin took 2 aspirin and changed and went with Padre Thomas to golf. We played 13 holes. He won 3, I won 2, and we halved the others. It would have been - won 2 each and halved 9, but for a bit of bad luck on my part. We each took the same number of strokes – 71. I putted badly, or I should have won easily. But my headache went, and I felt quite well again by the time we were ready for home.

It was a Race Day; and as the Race Course adjoins the Golf Course we stopped and watched one of the Races. Many Arabs had ridden in from the desert to see the Races, and were careering about the Golf Course on their horses, racing with one another. They were a nuisance at the 8th, 9th, and 10th. holes, as they got in our way.

After dinner I did, in my room, the work I was unable to do in the afternoon – I can't afford to get behind with that.

Saturday 18th November 1922

Worked hard during morning and afternoon and seem to be getting a bit clearer, though I don't know what may come on from the W.O. this mail.

Yesterday afternoon Colonel Fanshawe brought home two birds (he had been out shooting) one of which he said was a present from Bilderbeck to me, and it was arranged that I was to have it for tiffin today. Our butler, however, is an Arab who knows very little English and the instructions miscarried, my bird

being served up to the Colonel this morning instead of his own bird. The joke was that my bird was a desert plover, useless, tough and tasteless, which he had shot himself, and he was looking forward to a hearty laugh when this was served up to me. It was indeed hard luck that it should be served up to himself! Colonel Lindsay sent in a beautiful wild goose he had shot yesterday and we are having it for dinner tomorrow.

It is an astonishing thing what these wild birds find to feed on, and yet there are thousands of them in the desert.

Sunday 19th November 1922

To Holy Communion as usual, and after breakfast with Col. Bilderbeck for a walk round Baghdad. Our project was to walk through Baghdad West – then cross the River and back through Baghdad East.

We went by bellum over the River and past the British Residency (where Sir Percy Cox lives) to the Mosque of Sheik Ma' Ruf and Sitt Zobaidi's Tomb (she really wasn't buried here, but in Kazimain) where the chief burial ground of Baghdad is. From thence into the Baghdad West Bazaar, which I always think is so interesting, through the Grain market, past a group of Arabs fighting ferociously and bleeding; watched the making of poshteens (coats of dyed sheepskin), flour sieves, country carts etc. and stopped at a coppersmith shop, where I saw some of the Rebecca water pots (copper) which I wanted. I bought two, at Rs. 3/8/- a pound. Fancy buying jugs by the pound! (The Baghdad pound is about 2½ times ours). Yet all these copper utensils are sold by the pound, basins, cooking pots, trays, everything. Bilderbeck bought a large tray at Rs.3 per pound.

After making one or two more purchases we found it was so late that we had to go home and decide to "do" Baghdad East another time.

Monday 20th November 1922

Yesterday morning a few spots of rain fell, but not enough to call it "rain". We are beginning to have cloudy days now, and it looks as if rain may come soon. It is about due, I don't mind how heavy it rains after 17th December but I hope it is moderate up to then. Last year the heavy rains at the end of November washed away the railway line down at UR, on the way between Baghdad and Basra.

The mail came in punctually this Sunday (two weeks mails have been coming in together too frequently lately) and there was not a heavy batch of letters

from the W.O. I still have to work afternoons, but I am getting most of the heavier jobs clearer, which relieves my mind.

Walked to the Hospital this evening to see Case, one of the E & A men with whom I went to Kerbela. He had been seedy since that trip and on Sunday had a temperature (102 deg.) He was taken to Hospital Sunday night – but averred that he felt better tonight, though he didn't look it.

Tuesday 21st November 1922

Drafted my Air-Mail Report for the War Office today, describing progress made in clearing up since 1.11.22 – that's off my mind.

My servant Joseph washed two of my carpets yesterday and today they are dry – and greatly improved in appearance. He just washed them with soap in a bath of water, and the improvement is as great as any carpet cleaning firm contrives at home. He also cleaned my copper water-ewers which I bought on Sunday and they look quite nice.

This afternoon he bought a piece of Willesden canvas to sew my carpets up in – a sheet 4 yards square for Rs.2 , almost enough for a tent! He is a good fellow and is very proud of being a Christian, a Roman Catholic of Portuguese India. He has been trying to get Rs.1000 together in order to get married, but his family are continually writing for money, which he sends, so he never saves much. I reckon he will have about Rs.700 when he leaves me at Bombay and have told him to send no more money home. These Indians have very strong family ties, and a man will cheerfully beggar himself in order to give his sister or daughter a handsome marriage feast, and provide her with a dowry.

Wednesday 22nd November 1922

We are full of rumours of war. Many people seem to think that the Turks may make an attempt to take Mosul as soon as the rains start and make the road between Shergat and Mosul impassable for our troops and supplies. The pessimists say that he has only to march on Mosul and the city is his – full of the most valuable stores which we should stand no chance of taking away. The handful of men we have there couldn't stop him – nor would aeroplanes deter him.

The Mosul vilayet or province, at present incorporated in Iraq, is not really Iraq at all but a part of the Turkish Empire proper; 80% of the inhabitants are Turks, or Kurds who prefer the Turk. As a matter of fact , we had no right to

add it to Iraq: the inhabitants are said to want Turkish Government. If that is so, it should be given back, I suppose; otherwise what becomes of the much-vaunted principle of self-determination?

But the Turk will hardly risk a fight for it at the present moment – not until he has got all the Lausanne Conference will give him. If he did and took it – what about the British in Iraq?

Thursday 23rd November 1922

During the afternoon walked up to the Bazaar and found three new silversmiths working in Ghanim Subby's shop. Ghanim greeted me as "my friend", and had a low stool and cushion placed for me, and placed the coffee pot on the brazier. Presently one of the men poured a little in an Arab cup and offered it to me. I drank it, saying "Cheerio" - all of them smiling said "Cheerio", no doubt they regard it as equivalent to "Peace be with you"! Then a second cup, and a third, the last Ghanim offered me himself. Thus these followers of John the Baptist installed me as their friend.

Their coffee was very good. It is strange that only Arabs seem to be able to make really good coffee. One gets nothing like it outside Arabia and Mesopotamia. The brass coffee pot is never cleaned and acquires a thick dark brown coating inside – and I think it must be this coffee coating which is the secret of the pot, and the reason why they manage such good coffee. We, with our Western ideas of cleanliness, have the pot cleaned every time and never get good coffee!

Friday 24th November 1922

There was a big drop in the temperature today and I felt cold. The wind was blowing from the North, where there has been heavy rain. The River has risen 3 feet in 24 hours and one of the islands just below G.H.Q. is nearly gone. It is cloudy and it can't be long before rain arrives.

There are two large islands below G.H.Q. Formed by the silt (sediment) brought down in the spring floods. They stretch half across the river. Next floods will sweep them away and next year new islands will form in other places. On the first island perhaps a hundred black water buffaloes sun themselves, walking there from the bank, and spend half their time in, half time out, of the water. On the lower island, two or three men have various crops planted. If the river rises another three feet that will go, crops and all, as well.

After dinner we all went to the National Cinema, but it was a poor show and we were very bored.

Saturday 25th November 1922

Came home from the Office early this afternoon, changed, and played Taylor 4 ½ games of Badminton. It took 1 ½ hours and Taylor won all the games. He is in the way of being a champion at the game. I made him run about for his win, and he made me too – but he goes riding every day, plays squash every morning before breakfast, and what with tennis or Badminton most afternoons, must be in the pink of fitness. Poor old me – I don't get much exercise nowadays, and although I feel fit, I'm not trained to the last inch like Taylor is.

After I had had a rub down, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the just – the best thing after an hour and a half's vigorous exercise like that.

This evening was cold and we had our first fire in the Mess room. It was delightful to see the jolly old fire again, and we all sat round it and yarned – cards being forgotten. Just as I went to bed it started to rain, and I think we shall have a good downpour tonight.

Sunday 26th November 1922

Up at 7 and to Holy Communion at 7.30 but not so much rain had fallen as I expected and the dust of Nazim Pasha Road (the road to South Gate and the Church) was only nicely damped through. While I was in Church, however, it came down fairly heavily. The River has risen another 5 feet, and the second island has now disappeared.

After a while at the office, I went for a stroll through the city, but found nothing to buy, though I found a shop with four camel bells. The wretched merchant wants too much for them.

A most awkward thing happened. I forgot that the Principal Chaplain had asked me to tiffin, and had actually finished tiffin at "C" Mess before I remembered. I jumped up and hurried round to the P.C.'s billet. They had only just started – so I went through the whole meal again! It was a good tiffin, too. Walkey, the new R.A.F. Senior Chaplain was there. He is a rather nice fellow, and I didn't leave until after 3.

Monday 27th November 1922

This afternoon went down to the Golf Club with Padre Thomas, and were met with the statement that Golf was off, owing to the wetness of the course. However, after a little persuasion we were allowed to play, and actually managed 15 holes. The course was certainly very wet in places, and at first made play rather difficult. After losing the first two holes, I began to adapt myself to conditions and actually won 9 of the next 13 holes and halved 3, beating the padre by 6 holes.

In the evening, Taylor, Heaton and I motored out to Hinaidi and dined with the 2nd East Yorkshire Regt., a very nice lot of fellows. After dinner we went to their Concert, and Taylor and I gave two songs each. The room was not nearly such a good one as the Norfolks, and I wasn't in such good form (actually forgetting my words in one song) but I had a tremendous reception. I sang "It'll be all the same", and "I know I'm beautiful" as an encore; and "Beauty of the Guards" and "Italiano" as an encore. Nothing gives me more pleasure than these concerts; one is well repaid for the trouble one takes.

Tuesday 28th November 1922

Today just hard at work – and got rid of a great deal of work.

It has been a bit warmer today but Sunday and Monday were cold, or rather felt cold owing to the big drop from the previous Sunday.

This is a comparison of the temperatures

Monday 20 November	Max 85	Min 57	Lovely day
Sunday 26 November	61	50	Rain
Monday 27 November	62	53	Cloudy
Today 28 November	69	57	Fair

Wednesday 29th November 1922

Tonight went to dinner with Lt. Col. Bilderbeck of the R.A.P.C. Who is leaving tomorrow for Basrah en route to U.K. with the other R.A.P.C. Officers except Colonel Fanshawe.

After dinner we went to the Central Cinema but it wasn't a very interesting show and then "finished up" at the Maude Hotel. Two of the party got very tight, but I'm getting wise and just had one, and made it last me for nearly 2 hours! These are very difficult days, when all one's friends are going home, there are many "good-byes" to celebrate!

Thursday 30th November 1922

In the afternoon after tea went to Gharim Subby's and got my silver photo-frame. It is much narrower than I had expected, but not at all a bad piece of work.

Went to the 2nd Norfolks to dinner at Hinaidi. There was a company of nearly 30 (Heaton and Taylor also came) and a very good dinner. Afterwards went to their Concert, about one thousand men being there, infantry, artillery, engineers etc. I sang three songs, and had a great reception, as on the first occasion. I didn't give an encore to my first song, owing to a misapprehension, but the troops made no mistake in their demand for an encore to my second song.