



JANUARY

On the world stage, January 1943 saw the US President Franklin D Roosevelt (seated left) and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (seated right) meeting at Casablanca, Morocco. There they planned the next phase of World War II, agreeing the Allies would only accept 'unconditional surrender' from Germany and Japan.

Also at the meeting were senior military officials. So Dad ended up ferrying or encountering a number of his bosses - head of the RAF in the Middle East, Arthur Tedder, and Middle East Commander in Chief Henry 'Jumbo' Maitland Wilson.

Unfortunately, one of Dad's missions was to search for a plane flown by his direct boss, the Commanding Officer of Communications Flight at RAF Habbaniya - Squadron Leader George Milnes, a New Zealander.

He and ten others on board were killed in a crash after taking off from Baghdad. One person who nearly boarded the fateful flight, according to Dad, was the relatively young Shah of Iran. A lucky escape.

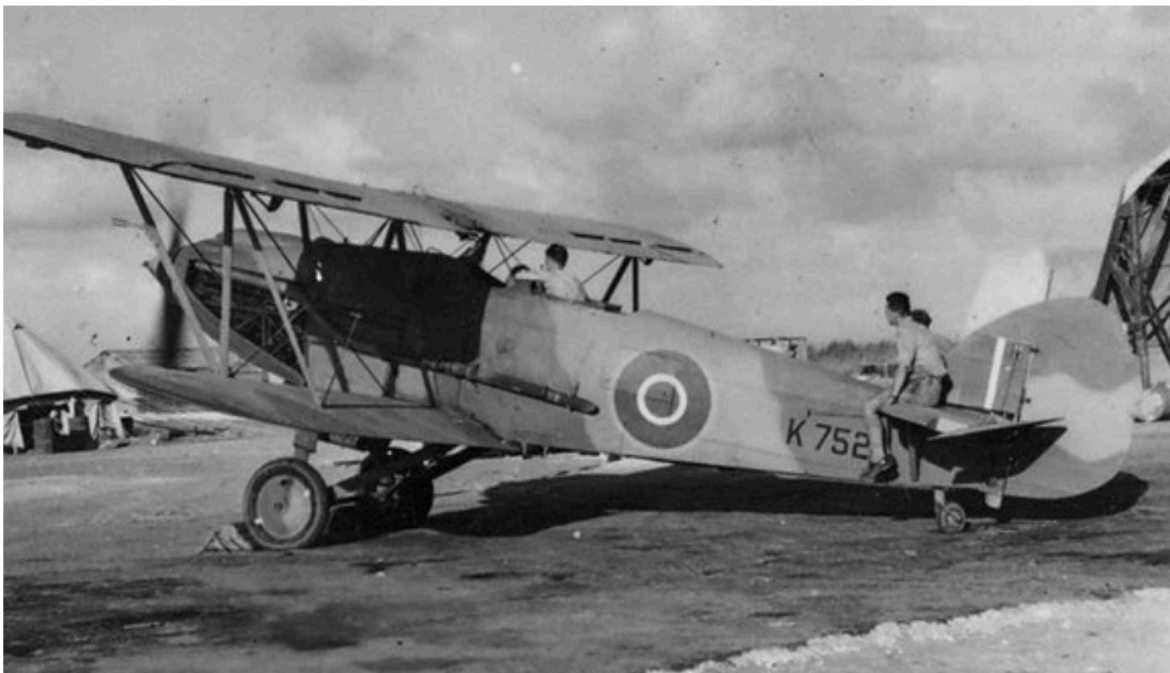
Dad describes some pretty shitty weather and uncomfortable accommodation as he flew around the Gulf in an American-built Lodestar, and then a Hudson aircraft, the same type Sqdn Leader Milnes flew and which was eventually found in mountains close to the Iran-Iraq border.

JANUARY 1943

Friday 1st

Got up at 7.45 & after breakfast went down to Flight at 7.50. Was due to go in Audax¹ but had mag² trouble. Sat around with an army officer until 11:45 am & then trip had to be scrubbed. Just had a cup of tea & then as I am Duty Pilot went to see how things were— coping OK. So at 12.15 I just came up for Tiffin. It was nowt marvellous. I must do some writing during the day. I hear that I may go with Clifton down the Gulf for about a week— We'll see if Shand³ lets me go. Went to office & wrote AM⁴ letter cards to Mrs Dyer & Joan. Tried to get in 1st house pictures— full— came to room & washed— Gladstone been beating the bearer - he better watch his step. Over to mess at 6 PM. Had dinner & then had a couple of bottles of beer & a whiskey left at 9 PM—bought bottle of gin 442 fils & down to office. Wrote AG⁵ Terry & Mum & then bed. Very cold. I was wakened 3 times during the night & didn't sleep from 5am- too damned cold.

*1 PICTURED: Hawker Audax (K752) - a two seater army cooperation aircraft.
Pictured at RAF Habbaniyah*



2 Mag - magneto. The spark generator to start an aircraft engine

3 Shand - Flight Lieutenant

4 AM = air mail

5 AG = aerogram.

Saturday 2nd

Came up for breakfast & got down to flight at 8:45 am. Just sat around. Then drew some pay £15 thinking I was doing a trip. Shand the little bastard won't let me go because of the Audax. So we said Nickels¹ would be back. He then said Kev could take him but Kev refused & now is to take an observer. I came up for lunch & had a game of snooker then ate a tin of sardines. It seems to me that I am the twat on this unit & will have to stay on the station all the time - to hell with that noise. Got an AG from Terry. Had an hours sleep & then off to first house pictures 'Captains of the Clouds' - bullshit². Had dinner & got an a AM letter card from Joan - She's on same station as Joan Stanhope - my past revealed - I hope not. Had a few drinks in the mess then back to billet at 11 pm. Goodfellow and Marshall supposed lost on the way to Tehran & after bags of telephone calls I think they are okay but the DP³ here has not received an arrival signal - I guess it is all okay. Wrote A.MLC⁴ to Joan. Bed at 0015 hours. We have to work all day tomorrow.

1 Flight Sgt Nickels

2 'Captains of the Clouds' - James Cagney plays a brash, undisciplined bush pilot who enlists in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Trailered with: "The Heavens Roar with their Glories" - was likely to be jarring to a real pilot stuck in a real war.

3 Duty Pilot

4 AMLC air mail letter card (pictured)



Sunday 3rd

Paratroop drops

Valentia (K3600)

Sgt Miller

Had to be at flight 8 AM & I just sat about & then went to church – came out & back to hanger. The AVM i/c Fighter Command¹ came in a Lodestar & the levies² gave him a guard of honour—they are hellishly smart. LC & PC (letter card and postcard) from home. Went for lunch then back at 1:30 pm to drop paratroopers very bump (sic) up & quite a wind blowing but dropped a stick³ – the AVM presented the first 23 with their wings. I came back then had tea. The big noise is going to Baghdad & Kisch took him. Shand has a couple of boils—I hope they give him hell & he has been in a flat spin all afternoon.

Rushton & Nickels & Stacey came back in a Hudson. 1st of all I have to take Val⁴ in the morning & now it is Audax⁵ – early and according to him if I'm late off he'll fine me 10/- - let him just try & get it. Knocked off at 4:30pm. It looks like I am Joe Cunt round here & I'm getting all the shitty little jobs but just let me get a chance to jump the little bastard and fix it- unless one is in the little clique here one gets all the dirty jobs. Had bath then over to mess & had two beers with Beattie– another JC⁶. After dinner Red & I had a few drinks with Kev & Gordon & I came to billet 21:50 hours. Sat & read & then went to kip.

1 PICTURED: AVM i/c Fighter Command - Air Vice Marshall in charge. Sir Arthur Tedder, who was Commander in Chief of Middle East Command until Feb 1943 when he took charge of Mediterranean Air Command, planning the invasion of Sicily and Italy.

The day after this entry (Jan 4) Tedder's wife, Rosalinde Maclardy, was killed when the aircraft flying her from Benghazi to Heliopolis, Cairo to join him crashed in the hills surrounding Heliopolis during a sandstorm. Tedder saw the crash.

It was a second wartime tragedy for Tedder. In August 1940 the couple's 24 year old pilot son, was killed in France.

Later in the war Tedder helped plan D-Day.

2 Levies - the Iraqi Levies, native troops loyal to the British who defended the RAF airfields.

Recruited locally, they were commanded by British Army officers at Habbaniya, The Levies fought bravely in the Battle for Habbaniya against Iraqi 'rebels' the previous year.

3 Stick - probably about 22-23 troops.

4 Val - Vickers Valentia aircraft, a bi-plane cargo aircraft.

5 He flew the Audax the next day

*6 JC - Joe C**t*



Monday 4th

Co-operation flights Audax (7542) Self

Got to flight 7:40 am, started Audax & took off with drogue ¹ 8:15 am. No drogue needed so released it & did usual stooge ² plus a few shoot ups ³. Hell of a high wind. Landed & had tea & shit storm blew up. ADC came in and after several attempts got in through the shit-damned good show. RSU (Repair and Service Unit) were taxying our Hart ⁴ out for test & turning down wind. Stood it on its nose. Stuck around for a while & then came up for lunch-shit still blowing. Tried to get haircut but barber not there. came back & had hours sleep & then tried barber again- no go he was out. Had wash & couple of beers then dinner. Came out & had a few drinks- Rushston and Beattie packed in-then Gordon & I was left with 2 Yanks. I came to billet at 10:45 pm. It had been raining & wind blowing like hell. I as usual got back to billet. Wrote AG to mother. Fell asleep on bed & woke at 4:30 am and climbed in.

1 Drogue - towed behind an aircraft, and for target practice.

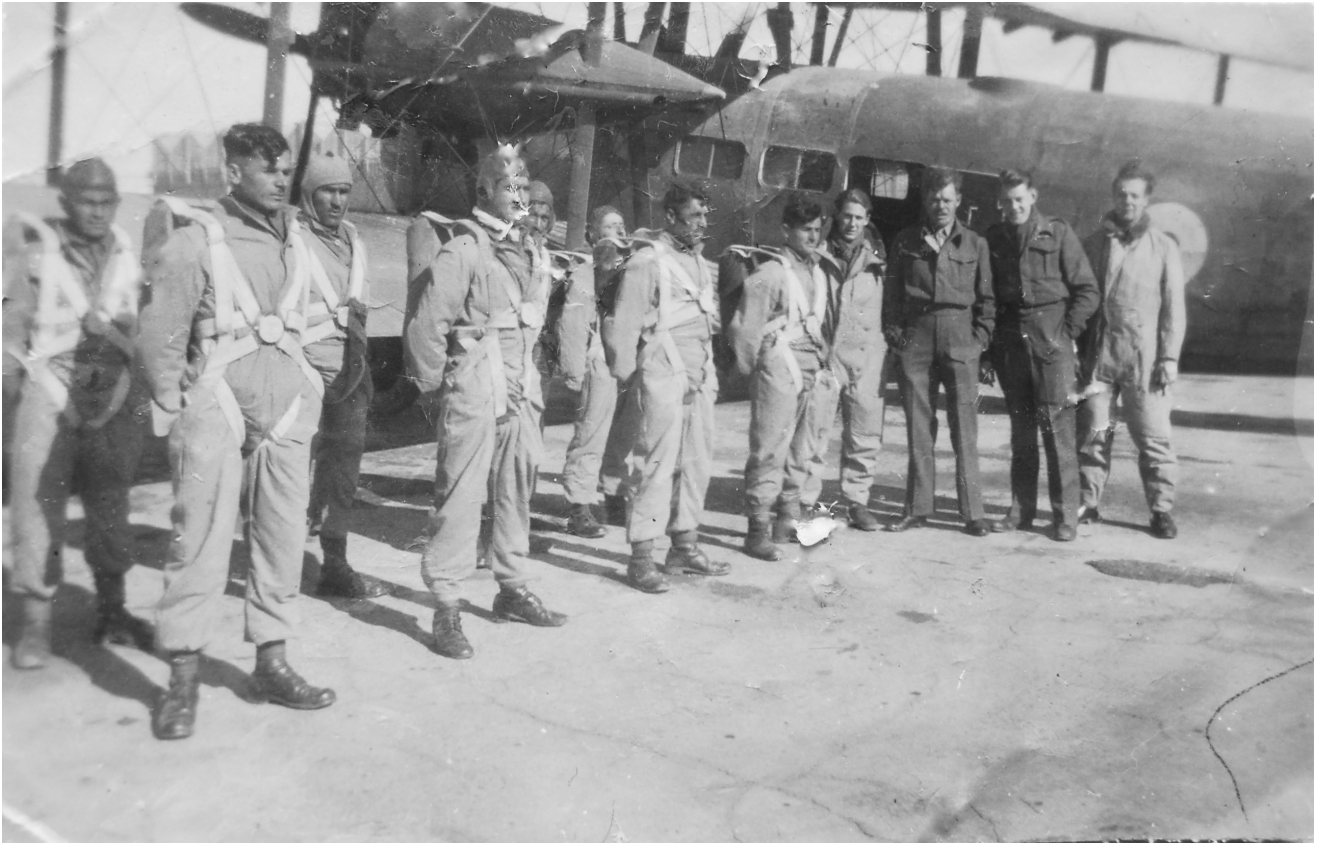
2 Stooge - slang for flying around aimlessly

3 Shoot ups - diving down low as if attacking

4 PICTURED: Hart - Hawker Hart aircraft. 2 seater light bomber, often used for cooperation work.



Jan 5 Paratroop drops	Valentia (3599)	Self
Jan 6 Paratroop drops	Valentia (3600)	Self
Jan 7 5 stick para drops	Valentia (3599)	Self
Jan 8 Habbaniya - Quaiyara	Bisley (454 Squadron) ⁵	
Quaiyara - Habbaniya	Hart (4907)	F/Lt Pooley
Jan 9 Paratroop drops	Valentia (3600)	Self
Jan 10 Paratroop drops	Valentia (3600)	Self



A paratroop 'stick'. They appear to be Iraqi Levies. Dad is second from right in the dark uniform. A Valentia is in the background.

5 Royal Australian Air Force 454 squadron was based at Qaiyara (modern day Baiji and about 130 miles north of Baghdad, and halfway to Mosul). It was a refresher training squadron for RAF crews flying Blenheim aircraft.

The day before Dad flew to Qaiyara to deliver the Bisley (Blenheim Mark V) the squadron received a secret message indicating it was being re-armed with Blenheim Mark Vs, relocated to near Alexandria, Egypt and reassigned as a maritime patrol squadron operating in the Mediterranean.

Monday 11th

Habbaniya - Shuaiba

Lodestar (686)

Sgt Clifton

Shuaiba - Habbaniya

Lodestar (686)

Sgt Clifton

Up at 7:30 am, had brekker then down to flight at 8 am. Took some kit to stay away a night. Started up with Kev ¹ in Lodestar ² but as Nickels put Audax up on its nose on runway had to wait a wee bit - Nickels had taxied out & seemed to be about to takeoff downwind & went up on nose. We heard weather was shitty & liable to get worse & we were to stop at Shuaiba ³. Took off & made Shuaiba-bit of dust haze but OK. It is a change to fly in a decent machine. Had lunch at Shuaiba & had to pick up some of 454 Sqdn. who had taken Bisley's ^{4a} there- they had flown in formation - each plane a full crew-the dim twats ^{4b}. Debated as to whether to take off & finally we did-couldn't take Monkhouse & Hamilton who had been down there 2 1/2 days as we were overloaded. Were supposed to go to Quaiyara but lobbed at Habb ⁵ for night. I had some cocoa with Randy, Popsy and Cliff & then in mess for a drink. Then had dinner & a few more drinks & game of snooker with Beattie - beat him & Miller & Rushton beat MacKenzie & I. I came over to billet at 10 pm & had a chota peg ⁶ in the billet on my Tod Sloane ⁷. We are to take off for Quaiyara at 8:30 am. AG to Joan & Terry. Bed 11:10 PM.

1 Sgt. 'Kev' Clifton

2 Lockheed Lodestar - 10-14 passenger aircraft

3 RAF Shuaibah - another RAF location, protecting the vital oil and refining operations in Kuwait and Basra in southern Iraq

4a+4b Bristol Bisley - was a ground attack aircraft. It had a 3 man crew. In December Bisleys from 18 squadron had been nearly wiped out in Egypt when flying in formation.

The Bisley was later renamed the Blenheim Mark V. These aircraft were involved in a series of crashes around the Gulf. Dad was involved in recovering two of these aircraft and mentions other crashes later in his diary.

5 Habb - RAF Habbaniya, which is en route to Quaiyara

6 A chota peg - a half serving of whiskey

7 Tod Sloane - rhyming slang for 'on my own'

Tuesday 12th

Was due to go to Quaiyara with Kev but weather duff. **Milnes**¹ called me into see my logbook & when he heard I'd flown Maryland² he murmured that if he'd have known it would have made a lot of difference. In any case I am to go as second pilot in Lodestar tomorrow with Rushton to Sharjah. Spent morning organising maps clothes Mae Wests³, dinghy etc. Had a coffee with Yanks and then up for tiffin-AG from Joan. Went down and got a bit of gen (information) on Lodestar from Kev and then had tea. Went to armoury but too late to go on the range. Came up & had shower & then to flicks - quite good. An LC from Mum - Dad was canned (drunk) Xmas day - wizard - I was almost. Had dinner & sat in mess & had a few whiskeys then back to billet 10:30 pm. I got bottle of whiskey from Kev as there is no drink down the Gulf - also two bottles ginger ale. Went to sleep at about 11.15 after I packed.

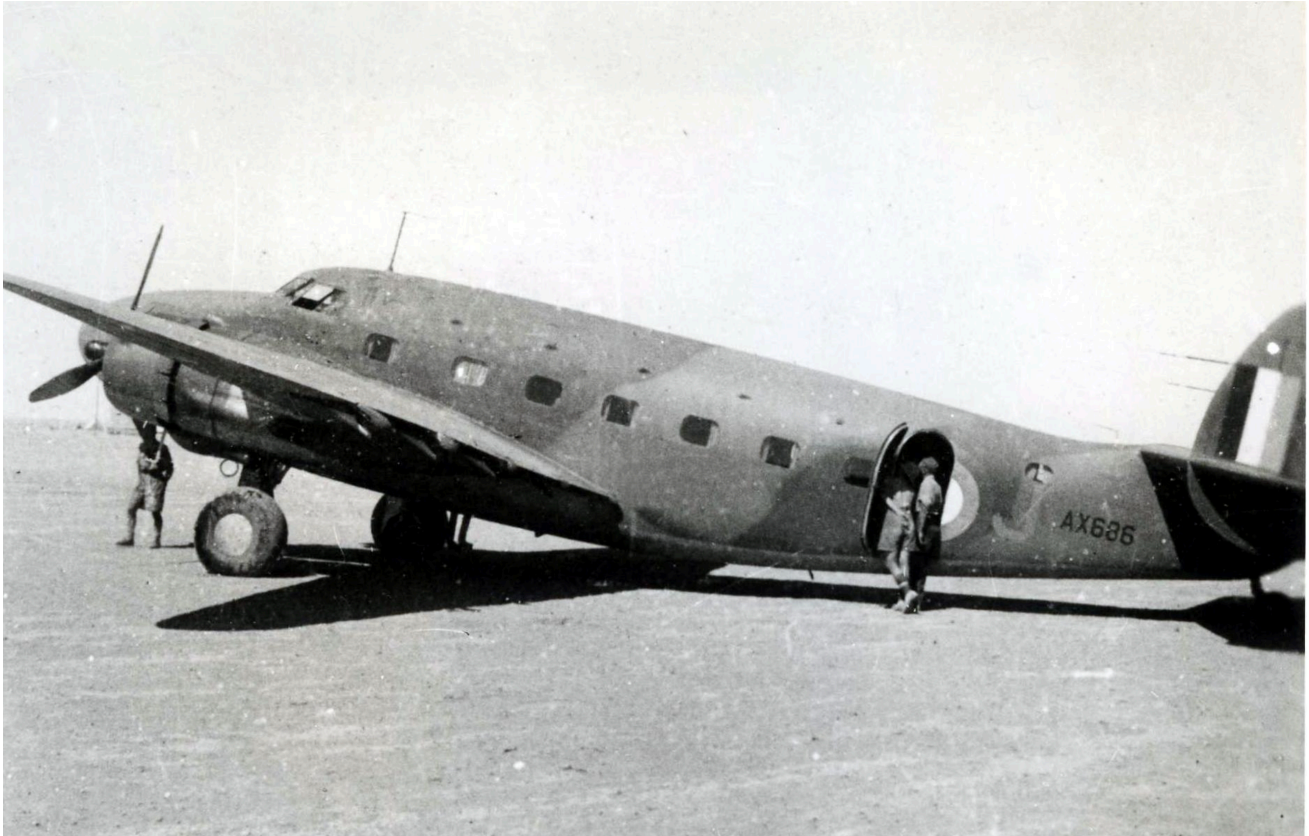
1 Flight Lt Milnes was a New Zealander. Later in the month he was killed in an aircraft crash. Dad was part of the search party after the plane went missing. (See later entries)

2 Maryland - Martin Maryland bomber, which Dad flew twice in September 1941 at SFS Kemble

3 Mae Wests - life jackets (right). Named after Hollywood star with large chest.



The next day, Dad flew to Bahrein via Shuaiba with Sgt Rushton in Lodestar (AX 686) (see map and below). Then on to Sharjah and back to Bahrein Jan 14. On Jan 15 the flight was Bahrein (Muharrak) to Abadan via Shuaiba, and then Abadan to Habbaniya - together about 3500km, over four days.



Lockheed Lodestar AX 686. It carried between 10-14 passengers. Copyright Dave Welch Collection.

Jan 13	Habbaniya - Shuaiba Shuaiba - Bahrein	Lodestar (AX 686) Lodestar (AX 686)	Sgt Rushton Sgt Rushton
Jan 14	Bahrein-Sharja Sharja-Bahrein	Lodestar (AX 686) Lodestar (AX 686)	Sgt Rushton Sgt Rushton

Friday 15th

**Muharrak (Bahrein) - Shuaiba
Shuaiba-Abadan**

**Lodestar (AX686)
Lodestar (AX686)**

**Sgt Rushton
Sgt Rushton**

Took off 9 am LT ¹ & landed again due to dipper stick ² being loose & then took off again. Went through rain & even out to sea to dodge more rain & finally approached Kuwait from the sea then on to Shuaiba. Had tiffin - O'Shaunessy gave me £8 to give to Hamilton (Paddy). Did blind take off ^{3a} in the rain for Abadan ⁴ to pick up some passengers.

Pissing down all the way & blind landing ^{3b} – looking out to side at Abadan - I wasn't scared-much. Saw Currie there we had to find tents at the camp & the rain was lashing down & bags of mud & it was freezing cold. Finally found a bed in a tent & had a not too bad dinner. Went to Gymkahna Club to an ENSA ⁵ concert– It was piss poor. Saw Wally Elliott for a couple minutes. Came back through rain to the camp and after a drink in the mess went to freeze in the bloody bed at 10:30 pm– It is all experience. 123 Sqdn Hurrlys ⁶ are there.

1 LT - local time

2 Control stick

3a+3b 'Blind take off and landing' - using only instruments for flying

4 Abadan - RAF base in Southern Iran near Iraq border at the North end of the Persian Gulf.

5 ENSA - Entertainments National Service Association entertained troops during the War. Alternatively troops knew it as: 'Every Night Something Awful'.

6 Hurrlys - A detachment from 123 Squadron was based at Abadan in the Persian Gulf between Oct. 1942-Jan 1943 equipped with Hawker Hurricane fighter aircraft.

The Hurricane fighters were based at Abadan to protect vital Iranian oilfields against attack as well as the Anglo-Iranian - later BP - oil refinery, which was the world's largest at the time and a prime target, particularly in light of Japan's entry into the war.

The Operations Record Book for 123 Squadron records Jan 15+16:

15th

" 15 personnel ground staff depart for Habbaniya, upon 215 Group's instructions. The rain we had been dreading has arrived, and the whole camp has been transformed into wet, sticky slimy mud, making gum boots essential. There are not enough gum boots for everybody, though, which is a very bad show.

16th

" The camp is an absolute quagmire, the worst condition we have ever been in. The C.O. and several other officers fly to Habbaniya. A few tickets have been allowed for an ENSA show in the main camp tonight 300 in strength, 50 tickets."

Saturday 16th

Abadan - Habbaniya

Lodestar (AX686)

Sgt Rushton

Got quite decent brekker but I was cold & bags of mud about. Went to drome. Currie & Len Bouchetare on 123 & Gibson was down there but he was reckoning on getting back today. Got aboard & tail got bogged but we finally got onto runway. Took off – a shaky do, a cross wind, with mud on either side of narrow runway. Flew out 800' ¹ to Shuaiba along roadway then at 1000' over Dwaniya ². Only intermittent cloud. Got to Habb OK. Hear Marshall's WO (Warrant Officer) is through & Beattie & Goodfellow going to be posted. Got 4 AGs from Terry and cable from Jean & letter from Ron Groves. Gladstone thinks he is posted home but it is only to ME to get rid of him – poor bugger. He doesn't know that. Had a few drinks– Paid bearer & gave Paddy Hamilton his dough, then back to billet. Sent Marshall up packet of Luckies ³. Cliff away. Had sleep, & over to mess after bath & shower. Had three or four beers with Beattie - then dinner & afterward, whiskey with Cliff and Gordon, & back over to billet at 10 pm. Waco ⁴.

1 800' - 800 feet. Staying low.

2 Dwaniya - town south of Baghdad on approach to Habbaniya.

3 Luckies - Lucky Strike, American brand cigarettes

4 Waco - Possibly acronym for 'We aren't coming out'

Sunday 17th

Went to flight at 9am after brekker & there wasn't much doing. I was to fly the Wellesley ¹ to B'hdad (Baghdad) when it was repaired. Sat around all morning & saw Boucher. He is up from Abadan. Had tea & as Wellesley not ready went to lunch. Lay on bed till 3.15pm & went to fly to go to B'hdad. Was on end of runway & was recalled to pick up a Group Captain but on way back got bogged on taxi strip - bad ground. After messing around I reckoned it was too late to go to B'dad so just parked kite ². Thibault took Groupy back with him in C61 ³. I came back & had a bath. Then AG to Terry & Jean. So had beer & over to mess. Had another drink, then chicken dinner, then more ale. Had a few drinks, came back to billet 11pm- have lost my watch. Can't find it anywhere. Bed 11.30pm. Fell asleep on bed for an hour & then piled in. AGs to Terry and Jean.

1 Vickers Wellesley - a light bomber that was obsolete by the start of the war but continued service in the Middle East

2 Kite - aircraft

3 C61 - Fairchild C-61, a single engine, 4 seat light transport aircraft.

Monday 18th

Was Duty Pilot. Arrived there at 8am. **Hear Milnes had left Tehran with lots of big wigs aboard, but had to return owing to wireless trouble.** Kirsch bringing AOC (Air Officer Commanding) from B'dad - bags of flamp ¹ & bullshit. Got letter from Phyl with snaps in - quoise. After tiffin went on range & the cylinder fell out of my gun so I had it repaired. AO ² didn't ,so came back. No news of Milnes. He hasn't reached Tehran & he was only 26 mins out but bad weather up that way. Found my watch in billet. Laid out flare path for the fighters ³ in case of scramble, then had dinner. Milnes definitely lost. Wrote to Ron Groves, Webby and Phyl. AGs to Terry, Jean, Stella, Joan and Ma. Back to DP at 7.30pm & just answered daft questions & drank cocoa & smoked. Head down at midnight till 1am - wake for an hour(s) & just cat-napped in case of scramble all night - weather was a bit duff. Trials of a DP - could I supply paraffin for hurricane lamps by the Controller, the soft B.

1 Like Flap or Flamp, means panic

2 AO - Armoury Officer - in charge of firearms.

3 Likely Hurricane fighters with 74 Squadron, known as "Tiger Squadron" from its tiger-head motif. Two Hurricanes from the squadron had joined in the search for the missing Hudson flown by Milnes.

Tuesday 19th

Up at 7am. Sent A/C of watch to fire cartridges for duty run - vis very bad - fog & drizzle.

No news of Milnes. 2 Hudsons ¹ standing by but snow fog etc towards Tehran. Shand and Stacy lost for a bit, but they got back to B'dad. Kisch gave me day off so had brekker & gave rest of lads off until needed as weather is so bad. I came back to billet & shaved 10am. Had couple of hours in bed, then up for tiffin. Read a wee bit then beat Hull at snooker & was beaten in a foursome - had some tea. Joe Doyce came in. He is WOP (Wireless Operator) on a DC3. ² Had bath & changed then in to mess & had a couple of beers with Joe. Hear I am to go with Kev in the morning on search ³ & Rushton is 2nd Pilot to Kisch as apparently he belts Hudson engines too much. We were due off at 7am but now 8am as weather is likely to be duff. After dinner Joe, Kev, Gordon, Mackie the fitter & I had a little session. Joe was sick & went to bed, but the rest of us left the mess 11.30pm. We are to be ready at 8am. Hope we find **Milnes** OK. Packed a wee bit of kit then went to bed 12.30am. If anything has happened to **Milnes** it will be enough to start a war. His reputed list of passenger(s) is Shah in Shah of Persia ^{4a}, C in C Persia ^{4b}, C in C Iraqi AirForce some of their families & a load of other big-wigs.

1 Lockheed Hudson, an American-built light bomber and coastal reconnaissance aircraft.

2 Douglas Dakota transport aircraft that Dad would pilot later in the War.

3 The search was cancelled due to the weather.

4a PICTURED: Shah - Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, (1941-1979).

Pahlavi had been installed on the throne in Iran in 1941 after his father's forced abdication during the

Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran.

The invasion was a reaction to his father - Reza Khan - ignoring warnings and threats from the British and Soviets to expel Germans still in Iran after Hitler had invaded the Soviet Union. Iran had declared neutrality, but ultimately the Soviets invaded from the North while British and Australian forces attacked the Persian Gulf.

The Shah (left) is with President Roosevelt in 1943.



4b Commander in Chief Persia - Lieutenant General Sir Henry 'Jumbo' Maitland Wilson.

Wilson enjoyed the Winston Churchill's confidence. He was appointed to command the newly created independent Persia and Iraq Command on 21 August 1942, created to counter the threat of invading Iran (Persia) if successful in southern Russia.



Wednesday 20th

Up at 7.30am - very foggy & had brekker. Went down flight to stand by for search. Report that an A/C (aircraft) was over Kermanshah¹ flying west - so we were to search that area if weather clear. Cliff & I, Kirsch & Rushton. Had tea & then another report that a/c was heard about 15 miles from Qum^{2a} & a Very cartridge was seen presumably fired from ground. That is feasible because if he was in trouble he would make for the salt lakes^{2b} there - anyway all planes from Tehran & and ADU³ Division are searching Later gen (information) is that we are to search from Habb to frontier - bloody stupid I think⁴ . Came to mess & Clifford beat Hamilton & Rushton at snooker. Had a drink & a natter & back to room - fog lifting. Read a wee bit then bit of sleep. Woke, had shower - changed & over to mess. Had a beer then dinner, it was nothing marvellous. Sat in mess & had a few drinks with Kev & Gordon & a few more. Kev has bought a Mauser^{5a} for £10 - not bad. Red has Berratti^{5b} £6 but can't get ammo. Sten⁶ gun fits Mauser. Billet at midnight & bed 00.15hrs. We are to be ready to leave at 8am tomorrow.

1 Kermanshah (arrowed below) - Iranian town and province ~250km North East of Baghdad, not quite half way to Tehran

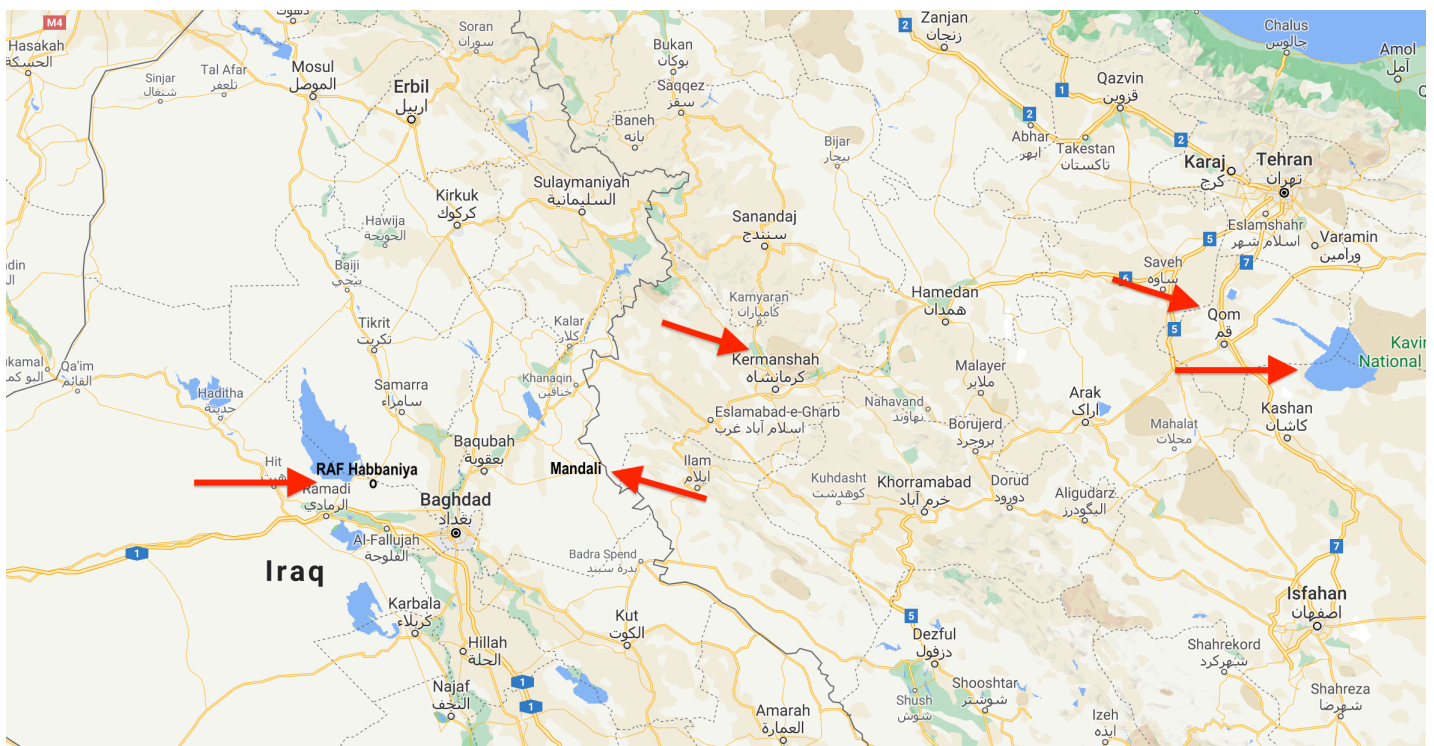
2a+2b SEE MAP: These reports related to the missing Hudson aircraft flown by Sqn Ldr Milnes. Qum (Qom) (arrowed)- Iranian town and province ~615km from Baghdad, and South West of Tehran. Namak Lake (arrowed) is a major salt lake

3 ADU - Aircraft Delivery Unit, in which Dad served.

4 The comment is likely founded on the fact that the frontier was only 120km East of Baghdad/Habbiniya and short of the sites above.

5a+5b A German and Italian (Beretta) handguns.

6 The British sub-machine gun



Thursday 21st

Habbaniya on search mission (recalled)

Hudson IV (624) Sgt Clifton

Down to Flt at 8am. Still shitty, but at 10am Cliff and I, Rushton & Kisch took 2 Hudsons to go to Mandali on frontier ¹ & search for them from there to here. Fairly cloudy, but we were just starting search when we were recalled to base. Got back & heard an a/c (aircraft) had be(en) found 9 miles S.E. of Qum ² - no other news. Sat about all afternoon then washed & changed & went to mess in evening. My birthday ³ also Bealing's & Hull's so had a few beers - Sid King, Warren & Don Williams were in & we got Kisch over. I got stinking drunk & don't remember from 10pm onwards, but they say I went out for piss & never came back. I wish I knew whether anybody put me to bed or not. Anyway we saw off bags of beer, 2 bottles of whiskey & 1 bottle of gin. I wish I knew how I got to bed. Shand let me off flying in the morning when I said I was getting tight.

1 Mandali (arrowed)- on the Iraqi side of the border with Iran.

2 Arrowed

3 His 23rd.

Friday 22nd

Woke up or rather was awakened & I was lying naked with only a blanket over me. Had brekker & went to Flt & sat around till 11 am, then as I was feeling ropey, went for lunch at 1 pm & then down to Flt did did more sitting & drinking tea. Came up & had shower & changed. Search seems to have been called off, but we don't know any real news. I think that they are all dead & there is more in this than we know about. Went to mess. Had a couple of drinks - was going to show but heard it was rotten so Cliff & I played two games of snooker which we won. Mackenzie said he & another chap put me to bed - I hope all was well. OB (Observer) Pearson was canned. I came to billet at 11:30 PM. Sat & nattered a bit and then bed at midnight.

Saturday 23rd

Paratroop formation drop

Valentia (3599)

Sgt Clifton

Went to Flt at 8 am & Shand told Cliff to take me in Oxford ¹ Radcliffe said I was OK. I went in Val with Kev & Dusty. Did 2 lots of dropping - funny to watch them come out of kite next to us. Came up to billet & then to mess. Mac & Jack beat Kev & I by the black. I came back to billet. Had to sleep & wait with Kev & Gordon to see ' Blood & Sand ' ² Came back & had dinner then Fritch came over & we sat & had a few drinks & yarned till midnight then we all left mess. Had a game of snooker against Dusty and Fritch. Rushton gone to Kermanshah with some anti toxin & he ripped his wing so of course a patch is needed somebody has to go up there. Hamilton at Shuaiba ³ & Kisch taken AOA ⁴ down Gulf. Robinson was tight and panned Fletcher & put him out of mess. Gilbert SWO (Surface Warfare Officer) been to B'dad & had his oats but just couldn't do his stuff on ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival) so 10mins after gave it up as bad job. Goodfellow and Beattie left for ME (Middle East) today by Nairn ⁵. They are posted.

We entered Tripoli.

This last sentence in the diary was a reaction to the news that the British 8th Army, led by General "Monty" Montgomery, had captured the Libyan capital after a 1,400-mile advance from within the Egyptian frontier - taking some 80 days. The capture of Tripoli from the Italians marked the end of Mussolini's "Roman Empire" and Italy's ability to continue to fight the war

1 Airspeed Oxford - a twin engined training aircraft, which Dad flew as part of his training in the UK.

2 A romantic bullfighting melodrama starring Tyrone Power and Rita Hayworth.

3 RAF Shuaiba/shaibah, near Kuwait

4 AOA - Air Officer Administration or Airport Operations Area

5 Nairn was the name of 2 English brothers, Gerald and Norman, who ran a desert bus service between Habbaniya and Damascus, Syria.

Two buses operated the route, used by many British staff officers. Each bus could carry 44 passengers and their luggage, was fully air-conditioned and equipped with a kitchen, lavatory and iced-water on tap. The journey took 72 hours.

In 1943 one of the vehicles was taken over by the RAF.



Sunday 24th

Paratroop drop in smoke

Valentia (3599)

Sgt Bealing

Went to Flt at 9 am - I think I have cold in the stomach. Took (Sgt.) Bealing in Val & we dropped troops ¹ into a smokescreen. .30mins 3599 ². Sat & drank tea & then Corpls challenged us to a football match. I hear that search is still on for Milnes & 1 kite maybe 2 have crashed whilst search but I believe crews OK. Kev & I saw Riddle about promotion & he says it is all under way. Also Kev's commission. Played football & we won 5-2 ha ha. They reckoned on a walkover. Had bath & shower, dressed & went over to mess. Had a drink with Kev & then ate. Hock & Ferney beat us at snooker. Had one or two more drinks & then Dusty & I went to Levies ³ mess - Hock & Ferney came along. We ordered taxi for 10.30pm & came back to our mess. I played Ferney snooker & won by one black & then came back to billet & bed 00.25hrs. Got birthday greetings telegram from Jean.

1 The plane could carry 22 fully armed men.

2 Valentia aircraft No 3599 pictured below at Habbinaya. Same plane as day before

3 There were approximately 2,000 Levies at Habbinaya



The search mission for the missing Hudson flown by Sqdn Ldr Milnes continued on this day, with 74 Squadron - based at Tehran - recording:

“ Four sorties, including two aircraft searching for a Hudson aircraft missing with the Air Attache to the Legation on board. Also four Iranian generals, the Director of the Public Relations Bureau, Tehran. Unfortunately nothing sighted. Aircraft had been missing since 18.1.43”

Monday 25th

Paratroop drop
Dual instruction

Valentia (3600)
Valentia (3600)

Sgt Rushton
Sgt Rushton

Down to Flt at 8 am & went up in 3600 ¹ & dropped a stick of troops, then gave Rushton dual & sent him off solo. Sat around & drank chai & then went to see if any mail - none as per. Had lunch & a drink & then went to flight & then up on to range - getting a bit better shot - can now lob them into target from 25 yards ². Went back - had tea & been up down to bulk NAAFI ³ & bought some stuff. Had some tea & then I had buckshee (free) do at pictures. Saw Marx Bros in 'Big Store' ⁴ - very good - I am DP (Duty Pilot) tomorrow & have to do Val in the morning. Came back & had dinner - received AM cards from Joan & Mum & beat Monkhouse at snooker then beat Miller & after a drink or two came back to billet 00.30hrs. Bed 1:15 am. **Hear Milnes' ⁵ kite has been found but all bodies unrecognisable - must have gone straight in.** I hear that Shah decided not to travel - maybe right, if so he was bloody lucky.

1 Valentia aircraft No 3600.

2 Accurate pistol shooting from 25yds is considered good.

3 The Navy, Army & Air Force Institutes - ran cafes and stores at military sites.

4 'The Big Store' was billed as the last film from the Marx Brothers - Groucho, Chico and Harpo. The comedy has them wreaking havoc in a department store.

5 The wreckage of Hudson VI EW969 was located by members of the Persian Cavalry in the Karghan Dagh mountains, some 180 miles south-west of Teheran.

The 5 crew and six passengers were all dead. They had crashed in bad weather during a transit flight

from Tehran to Habbaniya. It took six days to find them and the site.



On January 27, 1943, at Tehran War Cemetery, 74 Squadron based at Mehrabad (Tehran) airport provided bearers, firing and escort parties for the burials of the crew and senior officer - Pilot Sqdn Ldr George Milnes (RNZAF, and pictured left), 33yrs of Christchurch, New Zealand, Wireless Operator Stanley Gatley (Pictured below right), 23yrs of Hoole, Chester, LAC Herbert Gilchrist,



36yrs of Blackpool, LAC Rae Medina, 25yrs of Hendon and Grp Capt. Robert Greenlaw, 44yrs.

Buried with them at the Teheran Cemetery were: GHQ Baghdad official Capt. Edward Yale, 30yrs of Bournemouth and Director of Public Relations Bureau in Teheran Stephen Childs, a civilian.

Meanwhile, three senior military personnel - likely Iranian - on board also died - General Ibrahim Arfaa, Colonel Qahramani and Colonel Shaibami.



Tuesday 26th

Paratroops

Valentia (3600)

Sgt Bealing

Habbaniya - Baghdad

Lodestar (AX686)

Sgt Rushton

Baghdad - Lydda

Lodestar (AX686)

Sgt Rushton

Down Fit. Went in Val & then off to Lydda & Cairo with Rushton in Lodestar. Base - B'dad - Lydda -Cairo - ret. Took off from here & went to B'dad - drew pay first. Had lunch there

& picked up General Wilson C in C of Iraq ¹ & went to Lydda ². I flew most of way & weather was perfect. On arrival rang up Phyl & she said she was going to meeting but persuaded her to see me in San Rimon. Went with lads in taxi to Tel Aviv (About 30km) & put up at the mess. Had a good dinner & then out for the evening. Had drinks in various places & then to San Rimon. Had drinks there then Phyl came with Vivienne, who incidentally lives at Barnet. Saw floor show & it was a bit tight then Jock & I saw the dames home in a taxi to Sarafand ³- had a natter then back. The fitter was horribly pissed & ill. Phyl is engaged & reckons to be married to the Palestine copper in May - luck to him, he's got something there.

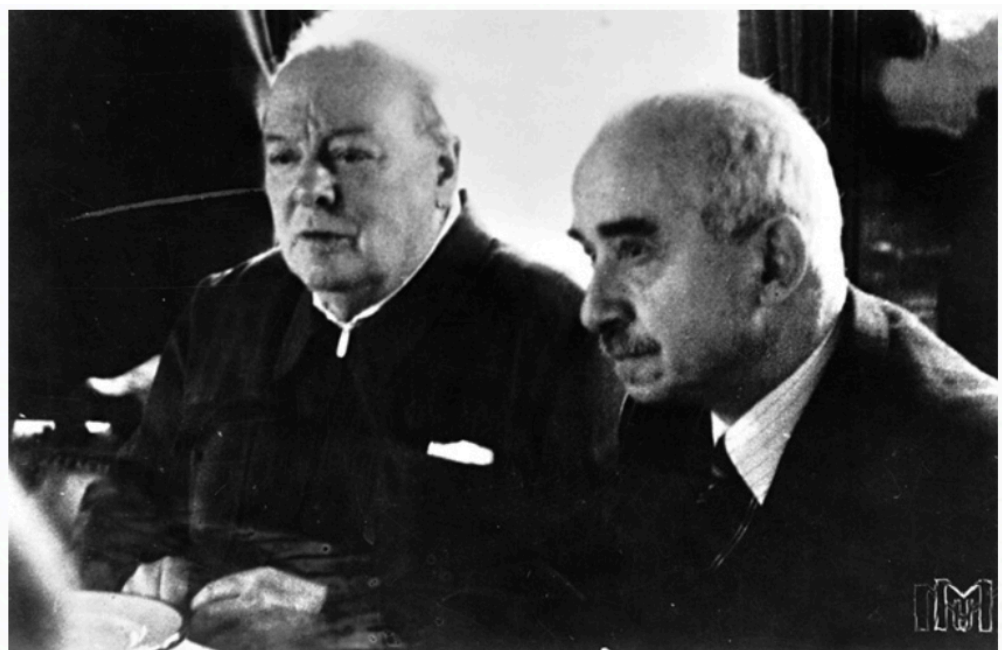
1 The meeting Dad flew Maitland Wilson to was with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had just come away from the Casablanca Conference with US President Franklin D Roosevelt.

The purpose of the Casablanca Conference was to plan the Allied European strategy for the next phase of the war, leading up to the Allied invasion of France on D Day. Out of the conference came the Casablanca Declaration - a joint statement that said the Allies would only accept the 'unconditional surrender' of the Axis powers.

Maitland Wilson and Churchill were going to the Adana Conference (Jan 30-31, 1943) where they both met the Turkish President İsmet İnönü with the goal of persuading the Turks to join the Allies rather than remain neutral. They were unsuccessful.

2 During WWII the British set up supply posts in and around Lydda (now Lod, Israel) and built an airport. (renamed Ben Gurion Airport)

3 A British Army logistics camp for the Middle East where a



British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (left) and Turkish President İsmet İnönü confer during talks in the Turkish city of Adana.

number of Women Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) were stationed. There was also a wireless intercept station feeding into the code breaking centre at Bletchley Park in the UK.

Jan 27 Lydda-Heliopolis Lodestar (AX686) Sgt Rushton

Friday 29th

Went to drome at 8:30 am, but General wasn't going so we were delayed 24 hrs. Good job really as booster coil ¹ had gone. Had lunch in Lemoniers & then to Rose Mary. Sat around then I went & had dinner with the boys in Lemoniers. I went on my own to town & tried to contact Ron but couldn't do it. Had a few drinks in Ex Mirandi & then as I had left note for Ron went to see if he was in New Star - he wasn't. Wandered down & brought stripes for Gordon & then over to tram stop & back to pension. Rushton & crew were back from flicks so we all had a cup of tea with Georgette & then to bed at 11:30 pm. I am a bit cheesed with Cairo though, there isn't as many troops in as usual - nearly all Yanks there now. I bet they think they are near the line - it is only past Tripoli ².

1 Booster coils help start the engine.

2 Cairo-Tripoli - more than 2,000km. So well away from any fighting.

Saturday 30th

Heliopolis-Lydda

Lodestar (AX686)

Sgt Rushton

Weather Test

Lodestar (AX686)

Sgt Rushton

Weather report to Lydda pretty bad but after a lot of arguing with Air Movements we got off - General not returning but Levies Brigadier is aboard plus a few more. Hit shit at El Arish ¹ but went on & got through it although Palestine is covered with local storms. We just got in to Lydda & then did a weather test. Must stay the night. The crew is sleeping in the machine & we were to sleep on floor, but we found beds. Had some beer during the afternoon & evening but went to bed at 9 pm. This is bad, very cold & wet & grub not so hot. We have to pay money out but officers get £1 per night & a good bed - it's all wrong. We should have a TDC ² as they have. Why should we sleep on a floor & then fly the next day.

1 El Arish just inside Egypt, near the Palestinian (now Israeli) border.

2 TDC - Temporary Duty Certificate - a system that meant officers could claim back an accommodation allowance.

Saturday 31st

Up at 7 am. Had brekker. Weather over Trans Jordan hills is bad & it is raining here at Lydda. Passengers decide to turn up at 11 am but we sent them away again. Sat about, then tiffin. More sitting because it is raining & freezing cold outside - even snow at Jerusalem. Had dinner, then Rushton & I took a taxi to Tel Aviv - went to Rishon, San Rimon & and then saw cabaret in Maxims. Came back on a Yank wagon at 11:30 pm & was in bed by 00.30 hrs. We had a good night - never spent much but as it was on the spur of the moment we enjoyed it. Rushton now owes me 92pts from Cairo & 50 pts for taxi & 38 pts for drinks etc. - total 180 pts & that is a low estimate, still maleesh ¹. Jock owes me 50pts.

1 Maleesh - slang for 'Never Mind'