

ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE (AISC)

JUNE 2016 NEWSLETTER



AISC OUTREACH VISITS

- On 6 June 2016, the AISC team attended an event titled, "Iraq after Daesh: Towards a Common Stabilisation Strategy", held at the residence of the Iraqi ambassador to the UK, Dr Salih Al-Tamimi. This event was attended by diplomats, academics and political/community activists. The Ambassador presented his approach and that of the Iraqi government at this event, with a panel of two other experts; Mark Byson Richardson, Director of the Stabilisation Unit, a UK government body, and Dr Paul Scholte, Associate Fellow of Kings College London. A further event to discuss Iraq after Daesh was then organised by the Middle East & North Africa Conservative Association in Victoria, London on 29 June 2016, featuring the Iraqi Ambassador as guest speaker on this subject.

June 2016

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The "Iraq after Daesh" event, 6 June 2016
(above and below)



The "Iraq after Daesh" event held in Victoria,
London, on 29 June 2016

- On 16 June 2016, the AISC team were invited to attend the screening of "Letters from Baghdad", a film about Gertrude Bell's life and influence on Iraq in the early 20th century. This was hosted by the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). The film was produced and directed by Zeva Oelbaum and Sabine Krayenbühl.
- On 26 June 2016, the AISC team attended an event held at the Iraqi Cultural Café in Camden Town, London. This event celebrated the life and work of Iraqi poet, Abdul Karim Qasid Al-Zubeidy. The event featured his poems, documentary films showing the poet in the Iraqi marshes, and also Iraqi music by the saxophonist Amar Alaw.



Screening of "Letters from Baghdad", 16 June 2016
(above and below)



Directors of "Letters from Baghdad", Zeva Oelbaum
and Sabine Krayenbühl



Iraqi poet Abdul Karim Qasid Al-Zubeidy and
saxophonist Amar Alaw at the Iraqi Cultural Café,
26 June 2016 (above and below)



مركز الدراسات الإنكليزية
ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE

AISC OFFICE SESSIONS

On 13 June 2016, the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre/Al-Hakim Foundation was pleased to welcome Sheikh Dr Mohammad Ali Shimali to our offices. Dr Shimali is the director of the Islamic Centre of England, based in Maida Vale, London. He visited us in the spirit of building integration between communities and faiths during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

During his visit, Dr Shimali toured AISC's library and also received a copy of "Bibliography of English Books About Iraq", published by Nadeem Al-Abdalla. We had a cultural discussion about Iraq and the Middle East, and the importance of documenting and reviewing these publications.

Dr Shimali is a religious and academic figure, who acquired his higher education in Iran and the UK. In addition to his role as director of London's Islamic Centre, he represents the Supreme Leader of Iran in the UK's social and cultural sphere. He wished the AISC project well in strengthening tolerance and understanding between communities.



Sheikh Dr Mohammed Ali Shimali with his delegation, visiting the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre/ Al-Hakim Foundation, 13 June 2016



Above and below: Ihsan Muhsin, Director of the Al-Hakim Foundation, with Nadeem Al-Abdalla and Ali Al-Mousawi receive Dr Shimali

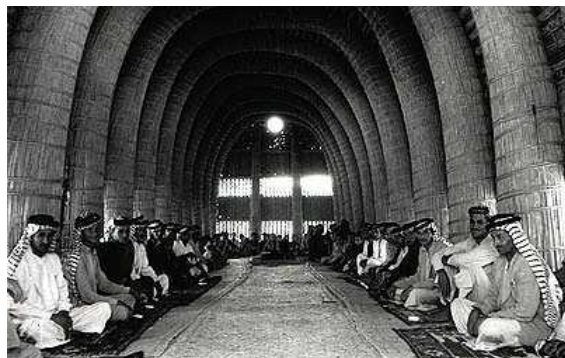
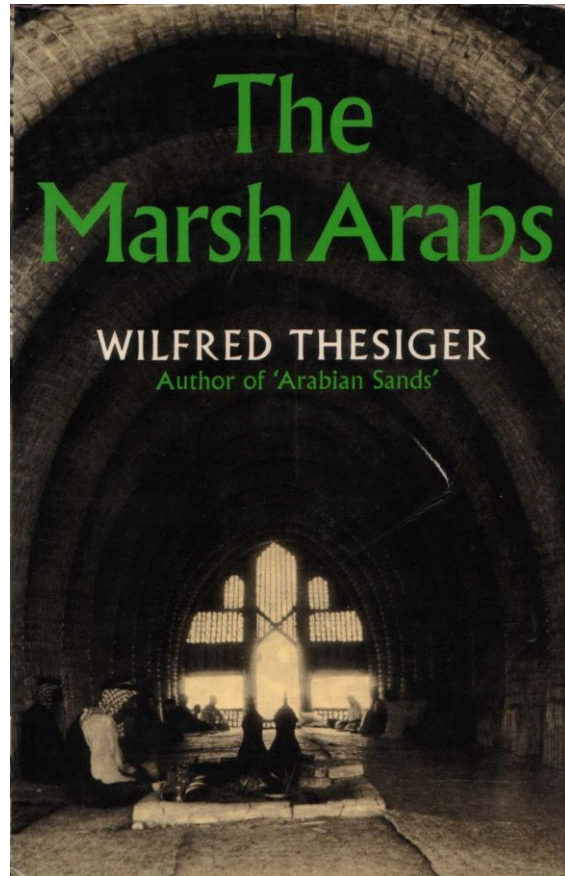


FROM OUR LIBRARY THIS MONTH "The Marsh Arabs"

Published in 1964, this book details the time Sir Wilfred Thesiger (1910-2003) spent in Iraq's southern marshes during most of the 1950s. His book contains accounts of the local Iraqi people living in the marshes. Thesiger lived with them for several years. Gavin Maxwell visited him during this time. Maxwell also published a book which talks of his time living in the Iraqi marshes: *"A Reed Shaken by the Wind – a Journey through the Unexplored Marshlands of Iraq"*. Maxwell's book was published in 1957.

During the Second World War, Thesiger served in Syria and North Africa and attained the military rank of Major. After the war, he then travelled in Arabia and spent many years living in the Iraqi marshes, after which he visited Iran, Kurdistan and Pakistan on his travels. Before his time in Iraq, he had travelled through modern-day Oman, Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

In the course of his travels, which were always completed on foot or by animal transport, Thesiger also took many photographs; these can be found in the Pitt Rivers Museum, based at Oxford. Whilst the Middle East was not the only region visited by Thesiger, he is best known for visiting Arabia and Iraq.



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ANGLO-IRAQI IMAGES

**From the photographic company
Underwood & Underwood
(Photos of Iraq taken in 1913)**

This company was founded in 1881 in Illinois, USA and ceased trading in the 1940s. During the company's lifespan, they moved from publishing stereoviews (the forerunner of modern photography) to publishing professional photographs for major organisations such as newspapers, magazine and periodical publishing companies. This began with the advent of modern photography in the 1890s.

By the early 20th century, Underwood & Underwood employed several full-time staff and freelance photographers. In the 1890s they continued to publish stereographs alongside photographs, until these were discontinued in the 1920s. At the turn of the century Underwood & Underwood began to move into "world photography", officially for the purposes of tourism and business development. However, this was also used in the course of delivering international news throughout the globe.

In 1913, Underwood & Underwood sent photographers to Mesopotamia (Iraq) and during their time here, took tens of photographs of daily life in Mesopotamia and also of the excavations of Mesopotamia's ancient city-states which were taking place in earnest at that time.

Western companies were looking to invest resources in Mesopotamia at that time, but wished to do so once the former Ottoman Empire had been dissolved. They were fascinated by Mesopotamian culture and its resources.

The photographs taken of daily life in Mesopotamia, and of the excavations of ancient city-states including Nineveh and Babylon, tell us a great deal about Mesopotamian culture and life in the early 20th century.



A street scene, Baghdad, 1913
(Photo by Underwood & Underwood)





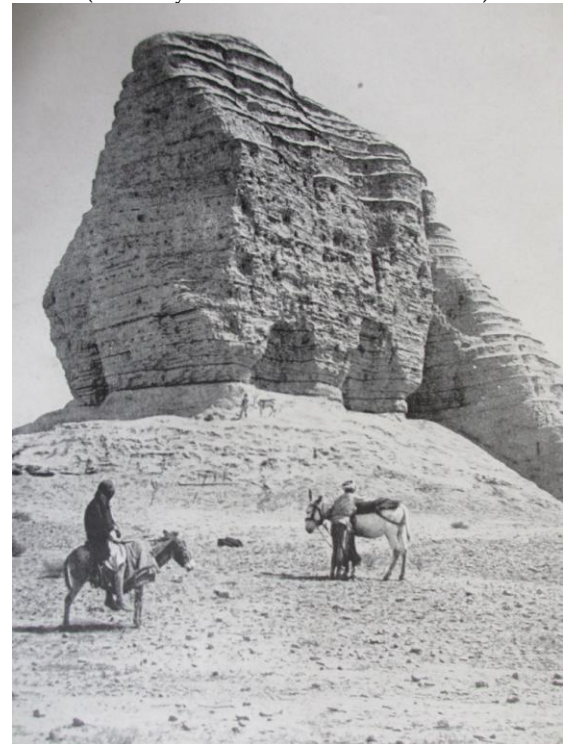
Banks of the river Euphrates near ancient Babylon, 1913 (Photo by Underwood & Underwood)



Excavations of ancient Babylon, 1913 (Photo by Underwood & Underwood)



A goofah (circular boat) and homes on the banks of the river Tigris, Baghdad, 1913 (Photo by Underwood & Underwood)



Agaguf Ziggurat, near Baghdad, 1913 (Photo by Underwood & Underwood)

ANGLO-IRAQI POEMS

From the book ***Mesopotamian Verses (1917)*** By Edward John Thompson

The book *Mesopotamian Verses* was published in 1917 by Edward John Thompson (1886-1946) and the poems inside were drawn from his experiences serving as an army chaplain with the 2nd Battalion of the British Army's Leicestershire Regiment in the First World War from 1916-1918. Already a well-known poet whose first poetry book "*The Knight Mystic*" was published in 1907, Thompson also published an account of his experiences in the British Army's Mesopotamia Campaign in another book, published in 1919: "*The Leicestershires Beyond Baghdad*".

Whilst the poems published by Thompson are tragic and paint a sad picture of Mesopotamia in that time, they highlight the struggles of the British and Indian Army. In their Mesopotamia front, the British Army suffered its second highest number of casualties after those sustained in the European front. A large number of these casualties resulted from fatal diseases caught and lack of medical facilities in the Mesopotamian front against the Ottoman Empire.

However, Thompson's Mesopotamian poems also gave readers a taste of the Mesopotamian climate and geography, and the conditions in which local people lived at that time. Two of his poems from this book can be seen below. They were written in 1916 at the time of the Kut siege, which claimed thousands of lives.

The Tale of Death

(January-July 1916)

*From Orah, Felahiyeh,
Sannaiyat, Hanna, Sinn,
Dujaila, Nasiriyeh,
The tale of death came in.*

*Death, where the soldier stands,
Burnt in an eight-foot trench;
Death, in the blinding sands;
Death, in the desert's stench;
Death, where the reedbeds' mesh
Traps, and the Arabs prowl;
Death, in the fly-blown flesh
And the water scant and foul;
Death, where the flarelights fall,
An hour ere dawn's faint flush,
And we jump the garden wall
(Six hundred yards to rush);
Death, where the P-boats go,
Packed with their huddled pain;
Death, where the strong tides flow
By Busra to the main;
Death, where the wind's hot breath
Fails, and the fierce seas burn;
Death, in the docks; and death,
Where the stretchers wait their turn.*

*From Nasiriyeh and Sinn
The tale came in;
And the sharked-tracked ships went
down
To Bombay town.*

The Pilgrim's Progress

*Poor, he waxes unto rich estate,
Tigris, by the desert stripped and
shorn,
Tigris, wandering through his maize
and thorn,
Tigris, pacing through his groves of
date.*

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about the AISC project, our activities and services, please visit our website at:

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