

ANGLO-IRAQI DIALOGUE FOUNDATION

# ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE (AISC)

## MARCH 2017 NEWSLETTER



March 2017

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## INTERNATIONAL VISITS & EVENTS

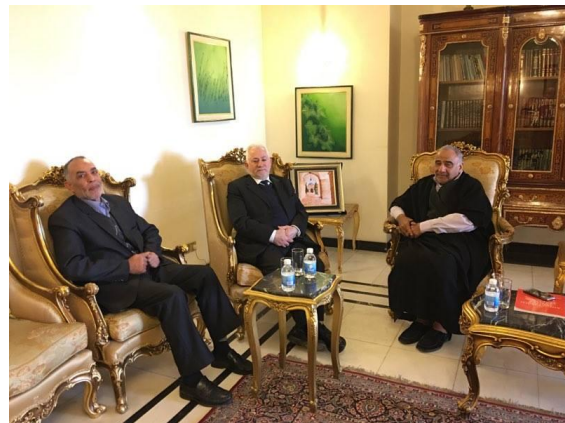
### Iraq visit

Ihsan M Al-Hakim, Director of the Anglo-Iraqi Dialogue Foundation and from the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) team, visited Baghdad in March 2017.

This was another opportunity to talk about the AISC project. In this time, Ihsan met with the former Iraqi Vice-President Dr Adel Abdul Mahdi.

Later during his visit, Ihsan also met with Mr Alexander Khadaby, an advisor to the British Embassy in Iraq.

In these meetings, Ihsan informed and updated them about the AISC project and publications, and its activities in the last year. They also talked about the Anglo-Iraqi cultural scene in the UK, and discussed ways and means to develop this project to positively enhance the Anglo-Iraqi cultural scene in the UK and Iraq.



Dr Adel Abdul Mahdi (right), former Iraqi Vice President, with Ihsan M Al-Hakim from AISC  
Below: Meeting at the British Embassy in Baghdad



## Sousse Literary Festival, Tunisia

Nadeem Al-Abdalla, manager of the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) in London was invited to attend a cultural conference (festival) in Tunisia, which took place between 28-30 March 2017. It was titled "International Festival of Creative Female Poets" and was held in the city of Sousse, Tunisia. Nadeem was received in the conference as an honoured guest at the opening of this festival.



This festival was organised by a cultural organisation known as the Golden Poems Association, with support from the Tunisian Cultural Authority in the Sousse region.



The festival was opened on 28 March 2017 by Ms Samira Shamtouri, manager of the festival, and by Mr Alshazili Alazabo, the Sousse Region's official cultural representative. There were more than 50 delegates from more than 10 Arab and international countries.



This festival's theme was to celebrate the work of creative female poets, mainly of Arab origin. As such, most delegates at this festival were female Arab poets. The three-day festival included poetry recitals, cultural workshops, and presentations related to the Arab cultural scene.



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Photos of the International Festival of Creative Female Poets' opening ceremony on 28 March 2017. Nadeem was an honoured guest of this festival.



On 29 March 2017, Nadeem participated in the first workshop of the festival. The theme of this workshop, facilitated by the Libyan novelist, author and academic Dr Fatima Al-Hagi, was about creative female writers.

Also participating in this workshop were the Kuwaiti novelist, author and academic Dr Fatima Al-Ali and the Tunisian author and academic Dr Samir Suhaimi. Each of these delegates spoke about creative female writers in the Arab world; Dr Fatima Al-Hagi gave examples from Libya. The examples used by Dr Fatima Al-Ali were taken from Kuwait, whilst Dr Samir Suhaimi took examples from Tunisia.

Nadeem approached this subject from a different angle; he gave a presentation on the subject of "Creative Western female writers and their contribution to Arab culture". His examples were drawn from the work of four Western female writers, who published more than 50 books related to the Arab world. These writers included Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), Freya Stark (1893-1993), Ethel Stefania Drower (1879-1972) and Agatha Christie (1890-1976).



Above from left to right: Nadeem Al-Abdalla, Fatima Al-Hagi, Fatima Al-Ali and Samir Suhaimi in the first workshop of the festival



Nadeem Al-Abdalla with Samira Shamtouri of the International Festival of Creative Female Poets

**INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CREATIVE FEMALE POETS:**  
Organised by the Golden Poems Association:  
Sousse, Tunisia (28-30 March 2017)

**CREATIVE WESTERN FEMALE WRITERS & THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ARAB CULTURE**

**THE LETTERS OF GERTRUDE BELL**  
**AGATHA CHRISTIE**

A PRESENTATION BY NADEEM AL-ABDALLA, BA, MA, MCIL,  
FROM THE ANGLO-IRAQI STUDIES CENTRE, LONDON, UK  
[www.angloiraqi.org](http://www.angloiraqi.org)

29 MARCH 2017 AT 11:00 AM:  
TEJ MARHABA HOTEL, SOUSSE, TUNISIA



Nadeem Al-Abdalla giving his presentation about creative Western females in Arab culture, 29 March 2017

## AISC OUTREACH VISITS

### Remembering Halabja at the UK Parliament

On 6 March 2017, Nadeem Al-Abdalla and Ali Al-Mousawi from the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) team attended an event at the UK Parliament to commemorate the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halabja tragedy which occurred on 16 March 1988.

The event was attended by official delegates from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, and by British MPs including Mr Nadhim Zahawi, a British MP of Iraqi origin. It was also attended by Dr Saleh Al-Timimi, Iraqi Ambassador to the UK, and Mr Karwan Jamal Tahir, the KRG's UK representative. Speeches were given by these delegates, and the event was attended by the Iraqi Kurdish community and their supporters.



### Remembering the life of Iraqi Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani

On 11 March 2017, Ihsan M Al-Hakim and Nadeem Al-Abdalla from the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) team attended a Kurdish community event in London. This event was held to celebrate the life of the Iraqi Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979).

Ihsan and Nadeem gave a few words at this event about the importance of positive community relations between all sections of the communities living in Iraq.



Above: Nadeem Al-Abdalla and Ali Al-Mousawi attending the UK Parliament to remember Halabja



Above: Nadeem Al-Abdalla and Ihsan M Al-Hakim attending an event to remember the life of the Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani



## Iraqi Association event on Middle East issues

On 16 March 2017, Ihsan M Al-Hakim and Nadeem Al-Abdalla from the Anglo-Iraqi Studies Centre (AISC) team attended an event held at the Ravenscourt Park Methodist Church in Hammersmith, London.

This event was organised by the Iraqi Association (IA) and featured a talk by Sir Vincent Fean, former British Ambassador to Israel, about British relations with Palestine and Israel through the years, with reference to the so-called Balfour Declaration of November 1917 exactly 100 years ago.

Sir Vincent Fean has had a long career as a UK diplomat; before becoming Ambassador to Israel between 2013-2016, he served as a senior diplomat in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

Dr Majid Al-Yassiri of the Iraqi Association (IA) presented Sir Vincent Fean to the audience, following which Sir Vincent showed the audience a short film made by the Balfour Project to summarise the subject. He followed this up by outlining his perspective on the issue, which was followed by a question and answer session for the audience.



Sir Vincent Fean, former British Ambassador in the Middle East, talking to the Iraqi community about the Palestine-Israel issue from his perspective. The event was facilitated by Dr Majid Al-Yassiri from the Iraqi Association.

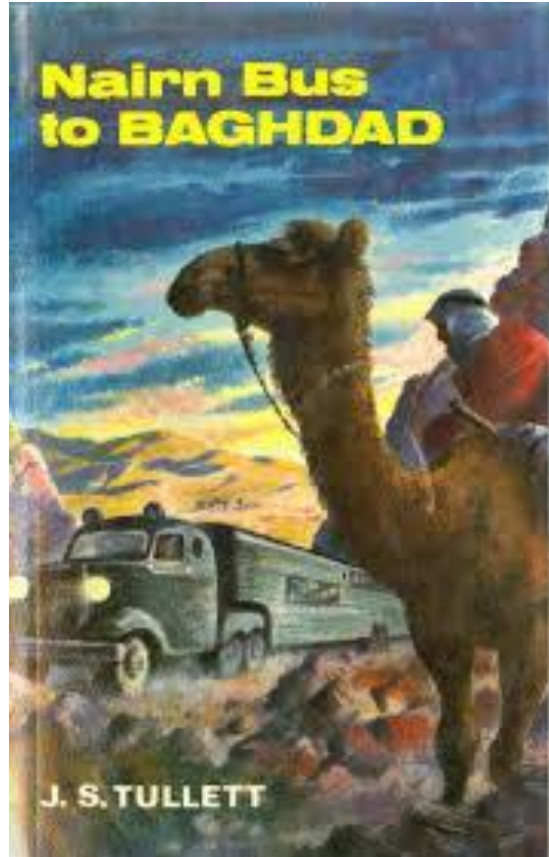


**FROM OUR LIBRARY**  
**THIS MONTH**  
**"Nairn Bus to Baghdad"**  
**(by James Stuart Tullett,**  
**published 1968)**

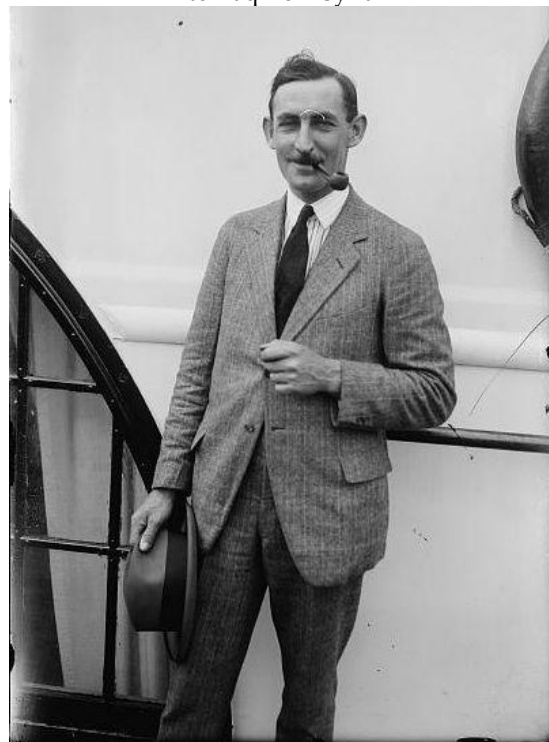
This book was written and published by the New Zealand-born author James Stuart Tullett (1912-1992), about the Nairn bus to Baghdad which travelled from Syria, Lebanon and Palestine by desert from 1923 to 1959. The name "Nairn" continued to be used for desert coaches until the 1970s.

In this book, Tullett talks about the lives of Norman and Gerald Nairn, the two brothers who successfully founded the Nairn Transport Company after the First World War and whose buses conveyed several well-known Westerners to Iraq from Syria via the desert. This method of travel was used by Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), Freya Stark (1893-1993) and Agatha Christie (1890-1976), among thousands of others.

Norman Nairn (1895-1968) served in the First World War in the Middle East with his brother Gerald (1897-1980). After the end of the war, they stayed in the Middle East and decided to enter the transportation industry. At that time, following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the renewed Western interest in excavating ancient city-states in Iraq (Mesopotamia) there was no shortage of passengers requiring this service. The Nairn buses to Baghdad were a cheaper alternative than flying to Baghdad; it was £30 per person by bus, compared to £150 per person by plane at that time.



"Nairn Bus to Baghdad" which conveyed travelers to Iraq from Syria



Norman Nairn (1895-1968)



The Nairn Transport Company pioneered the first scheduled bus service between Damascus, Beirut, Haifa and Baghdad, at a time when their routes were tracks through the 1,000 kilometre desert.

When setting off to or from Baghdad these buses, carrying several passengers each, travelled in convoy. This was to provide each bus driver with mutual assistance and protection due to the desert terrain, and in case of attacks on the convoy en-route.

These buses were a far cry from what we travel on in cities today; they were manufactured and pulled by American Cadillac trucks, with air-conditioned Pullman trailers attached. The trucks and trailers were fitted with tropical tyres, capable of making the long desert journey many times before needing to be replaced. Compared with modern buses, the interior of Nairn buses was filled with seats similar to those found in airlines today. These desert buses from Damascus to Baghdad were described as a wonder of the transport world at that time, and were heavily used; each night several passengers would make the overnight journey to Baghdad, when temperatures were cooler in the already hot desert.

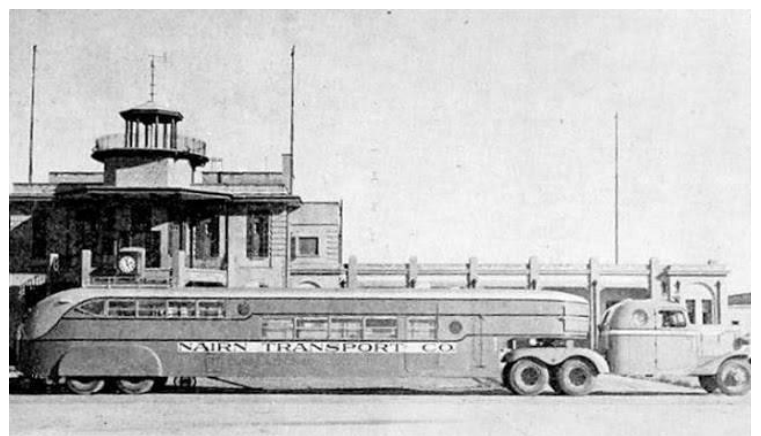
In 1959, Nairn buses to Baghdad ceased operation. This was due to the new political and economic atmosphere in Iraq.



A Nairn bus to Baghdad via the desert in transit



Resting place of a Nairn bus en route to Baghdad



A Nairn bus pulling away from one of its stops en route to Baghdad



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## FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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“Enhancing Integration Through Knowledge,  
Where East Meets West ”



[www.angloiraqi.org](http://www.angloiraqi.org)

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