

# ROYAL AIR FORCE.

## CERTIFICATE OF THE SERVICE AND DISCHARGE OF

The corner of this Certificate  
to be cut off if the man  
is discharged with a  
"Bad" Character  
or with disgrace,  
or if specially  
directed by  
the Air  
Council.

NAME MARK HAM *Wilfred* OFFICIAL No. 515223  
(in full, Surname first)

DATE OF BIRTH 1 May 1913 AGE ON ENTRY INTO R.A.F. 18 years 137 days.

PLACE OF BIRTH (Parish) Asby (Town & County) Asby, Lincolnshire Council.

OCCUPATION IN CIVIL LIFE Mill Hand

TRADE IN ROYAL AIR FORCE Aircraft Hand Group V

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION Methodist *METHODIST*

SIGNATURE ON TRANSFER TO THE RESERVE OR DISCHARGE *Shable*

CURRENT ENGAGEMENT IN H.M. FORCES :-

(a) State whether in Army, Navy, or R.A.F. R.A.F.

(b) Period

Date current engagement commenced.	Age at that date.	Terms of Enlistment.
<u>14 Sep 1931</u>	<u>18<sup>137</sup> 3/65</u>	<u>8 and 0.</u>

(c) Date of actual entry into

- ..... R.N.A.S. ....
- ..... R.F.C. ....
- ..... R.A.F. 14 Sep 1931 .....

(d) Period engagement extended for } years Regular A.F. Service.  
years Reserve Service.

(e) Period re-engaged for .....

PRIOR ENGAGEMENT IN H.M. FORCES.

Service (Navy, Army, or R.A.F.).	Period.		Rank on Discharge.
	From	To	

DATE TRANSFERRED TO ROYAL AIR FORCE RESERVE. (Period not to count as qualifying service for Pension.) DATE

NAME, ADDRESS and RELATIONSHIP of person to be informed  
Mrs. L.M. Markham "Ambala" Rowell

PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE

Full Christian Names and Surname of Woman, and whether Spinster or Widow.	Place and Date of Marriage.
<u>LIZEN MAY BURBANK</u> <u>Spinster</u>	<u>Registon Hall</u> <u>Wetherby</u> <u>10 January 1939</u>

DESCRIPTION OF PERSON.	Height.		Chest.	H
	Feet.	Inches.		
On entry as a boy				
On mustering as a man at age of 18 years	<u>5</u>	<u>5<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>31</u>	<u>4<sup>1</sup></u>
Or on entry at 18 years or over				
On extension of service				
On re-engagement				
Further description if necessary				



515223 Markham Wilfred

14 Sept 1931 to 13 June 1939

Timeline and photographs

# Before he enlisted in the RAF 1926, 1929 and 1931



Ashby Silver Band ca. 1926

This photograph of the Ashby Institute Band is believed to have been taken around the mid-twenties:

Those appearing thereon are:

Back Row: Harry BEACOCK, Joe RICHARDSON, Charlie READ, Bernard JOHNSON, Mr HALLER, Fred FOSTER, Mr JACKLIN, Ray MARKHAM, Bill SIMPSON.  
 Middle Row: Drummer Jim STOTT, Fred JOHNSON, Frank JOHNSON, Boy JOHNSON, Frank BEACOCK, Wilf MARKHAM, Dick DENT, Harry DRIFFIELD, Joe HOLTYB, Jim MARKHAM, F FOX.  
 Front Row: Mr READ, Bickerstaff KENDALL, A. SMITH, Mr Clement KENDALL, Tom READ, Mr Arthur WATSON, Bill KENDALL, George WATSON, Mr LISTER, Mr DRURY

(I have tried to include first names, where possible as would be best known at the time, and I hope without error).  
 This band which was helped by public subscription continued latterly under other names and finally disappeared some years ago.

**DRIVER'S LICENCE No. 79057**  
 MOTOR CAR ACT, 1903.  
 COUNTY OF THE PARTS OF LINDSEY, LINCOLNSHIRE.  
 Licence to Drive a Motor Car or Motor Cycle.

WILFRED MARKHAM  
 57 North Parade, Ashby, Leicestershire

is hereby licensed to drive a Motor Car or Motor Cycle only for the period of twelve months from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May 1929, until the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April 1930, inclusive.

Local Taxation Licences Dept.,  
 County Offices, Newland, Lincoln.

Clerk of the County Council.

N.B.—Particulars of any endorsement of any licence previously held by the person licensed must be entered on the back of this licence.

Aged just 16!

*Be more careful in backing your lorry in future!*  
 18 February 1931

Form 16 A

**Superintendent's Office,**  
 SCUNTHORPE, X

27th February 1931. 192-

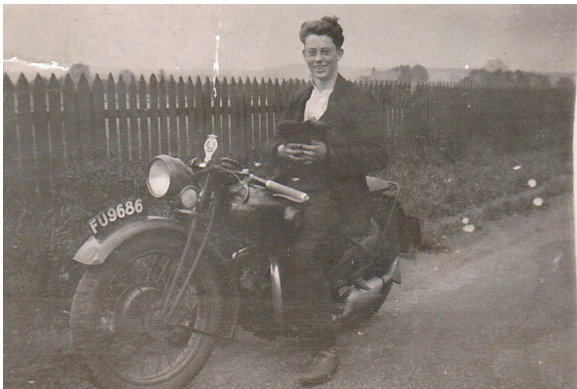
Dear Sir,

I am directed by the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire to say that it has been reported to him that you were involved in a collision with a stationary motor car on Frodingham Road, Scunthorpe, on the 18th February 1931.

You are hereby cautioned to be more careful when backing your motor lorry in future.

Mr. Wilfred Markham,  
 57 North Parade,  
 ASHBY,  
 Scunthorpe.

Yours faithfully,  
*Joseph M. Richardson*  
 Superintendent.



*"It's me before I joined up - Wilf"*  
 (written on the back of the photo)

And after!



515223 Markham Wilfred

Age on entry to RAF 18 years and 137 days on 14 Sept 1931  
Civil occupation. Mill Hand, employer J. Dobnay, Frodingham Road, Scunthorpe  
Trade in Royal air Force: Aircraft Hand, Group V  
Religion: Methodist  
Height: 5 ft. 5 1/2 inches Chest 31 inches  
From 14 Sept 1931 enlistment 8 years and 0

FROM	TO	Date of effect
Enlistment	T depot Sqn A.T.A.E.E	14 Sept 1931
T depot Squadron	Martlesham Heath, A +AEE	9 Feb 1932
A +AEE	Cranwell, E and W School	6 June 1932
(Remustered from Aircraft hand to Wireless Op)		21 July 1933
E and W School	58 (B) Squadron	17 Aug 1933
58 (B) Squadron	Iraq Command	18 Oct 1933
58 (B) Squadron	203 (FB) Squadron, Basra	10 Nov 1933
203 (FB) Squadron Aden	India 28 (AC) Squadron, Ambala	4 April 1936
28 (AC) Squadron	Ambala (CWS)	30 July 1938
SHQ Ambala (CWS)	HE RAF Helmswell	20 Dec 1938
HE RAF Helmswell	RAF Wattisham	26 April 1939
RAF Wattisham	Discharge	13 June 1939



## From September 1931

We don't know too much except that the "T depot" means, I presume, Basic training and the posting to Martlesham Heath (near Woodbridge in Suffolk) is the "Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment". The studio photo shows him after training (complete with "swagger stick") with his parents James and Betsy and sister Sylvia.

### NON-STOP CAR Scunthorpe Police Want to See Driver

Scunthorpe police are anxious to trace a four-seater saloon motor car which knocked down Wilfrid Markham, an airman on leave, in East Common-lane, Brigg-road, Ashby. The car did not stop, but proceeded in the direction of Brigg. Markham was taken to Scunthorpe Hospital, where he was detained suffering from head injuries and injuries to one foot.

The car which the police are anxious to trace has a blue body and yellow wheels and the police desire any person, or the driver of the the car, who can give any information regarding the accident to communicate with the nearest police station.

From his service records: "Admitted Scunthorpe Hospital 6.3.32"

But "Blue body and yellow wheels" ??

Recruit 515223  
AC2 Markham W



## June 1932 to August 1933, RAF Cranwell, E and W School

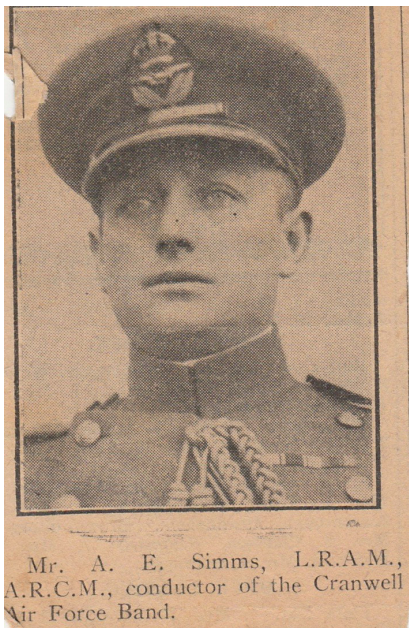
“E and W” stands for Electrical and Wireless School and it was also home to (since its formation in 1920), to the Band of the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell (near Sleaford in Lincolnshire), and is arguably the band which is most steeped in musical history and tradition.

Dad said that it was the Central Band of the RAF, which it probably was in 1932, and I had presumed he joined up as a musician and then re-mustered as a Wireless Operator, but his records state that he re-mustered from ACH (Aircraft Hand and not musician) to W.Opr. (2) and reclass to AC1 on 21st July 1933 on completion of his training. It would appear that under Miscellaneous in his records “a very good cornet player” and presumably he played with the band during his W.Op training whilst on the same station. *Note:* He had played in the Ashby Silver Band from the age of 12 and he was, I believe, Solo Cornet, and here at Cranwell he was placed as 3rd Cornet, which he didn't particularly like!

Based at RAF College Cranwell, Lincolnshire since its formation, the Band continues to perform at a diverse range of venues and engagements across the UK and in countries worldwide



Written on the back of the photo “*Cranwell Xmas 1932*”



A.E Simms


This is a paper cutting together with the photo when he was the conductor of the band in 1932, he was a Warrant Officer then therefore ‘Mr’.

Wing Commander Albert Ernest Sims, LVO, OBE (1896–1981), often known as A. E. Sims and nicknamed George, was a British composer, conductor, and director of music of the Central Band of the Royal Air Force.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF\\_Cranwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Cranwell)

There are no other photos from the Electrical and Wireless School at RAF Cranwell but from his service records he underwent training as a Wireless Operator from 6th June 1932 to 20th July 1933 and he passed the C.T.T.B with 62%. He passed the Final Education test on the 28th Feb. 1933 (with a "B")

I haven't been able to find out what C.T.T.B stands for but I presume it is the final exam as Wireless Operator.

 *Wireless operators* are suitable for wireless watchkeeping duties and the operation of W/T and R/T apparatus. They have been trained to a high standard in sending and receiving by buzzer, semaphore, and Aldis lamp. They have a good knowledge of the elementary principles of magnetism and electricity—primary and secondary cells—types and properties of aerials and earth systems, open and closed oscillatory circuits—practical forms of coupling—simple fundamentals of motors, motor generators, starters and regulators, etc.—the principles involved in the circuits of all transmitters, receivers and miscellaneous W/T apparatus, and can detect simple faults and rectify them.



## From 17 August 1933 and posting to 58 (B) Squadron

He left RAF Cranwell and the Electrical and Wireless School on the 17th August 1933 and was posted to No. 58 (B) squadron. the B stands for Bomber, but I still have not been able to find out where the RAF station they were based at or which aircraft they had, but I am sure it was the Vickers Virginia Bomber and the squadron was based at RAF Upper Heyford as a training squadron. There there is an interesting youtube video "Vickers Virginia flight ops 1935" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4BiG11lNM4>) and to show what the aircraft was like.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers\\_Virginia#Operational\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Virginia#Operational_history).



Here we know the exact date that this photo was taken - 14th October 1933 - at the wedding of his brother, Raymond Markham (centre) to Mary Ellen Hunter in Ashby, Scunthorpe.

Raymond is my uncle, and I have my middle name Raymond from him. The 2 brothers were very close throughout their lives.

*Note:* The little boy in the doorway ready to turn the lights on!

He must have been on embarkation or re-location leave as it was just 4 days before leaving for his posting to Iraq.

## From October 1933 and posting to Iraq Command

Just 4 days later, on the 18th October, he was posted to Iraq Command to RAF Shaibah near Basra. Shaibah is the name of a small village and a site of a military airfield near Az Zubayr, 7 miles (11 km) south west of Basrah in Iraq. One of his first photos from Iraq was dated September 1933

But how did get there? It was either by sea or by air, or by both, and the clues are maybe these photos:  
(we also have 2 more photos all dated 1933 taken at Ismalia and on the Suez canal)

Written on the back of the photo:  
*'Housie' school in the Mediterranean 1933*  
*Note: This was taken on a troopship, and the group in the front were Army.*

“Housie Housie” another name for bingo, lotto so called from the cry of ‘house!’ shouted by the winner of a game, probably from full house



Written on the back of the photo: *“Ctesiphon arch aerial view taken from a Vickers Troopcarrier”*

There is another photo of the Ctesiphon Arch in the album and written on the back *“One of the seven wonders of the world 195 ft high”*

Ctesiphon was an ancient city located on the eastern bank of Tigris, and about 35 kilometres (22 mi) south-east of present-day Baghdad.

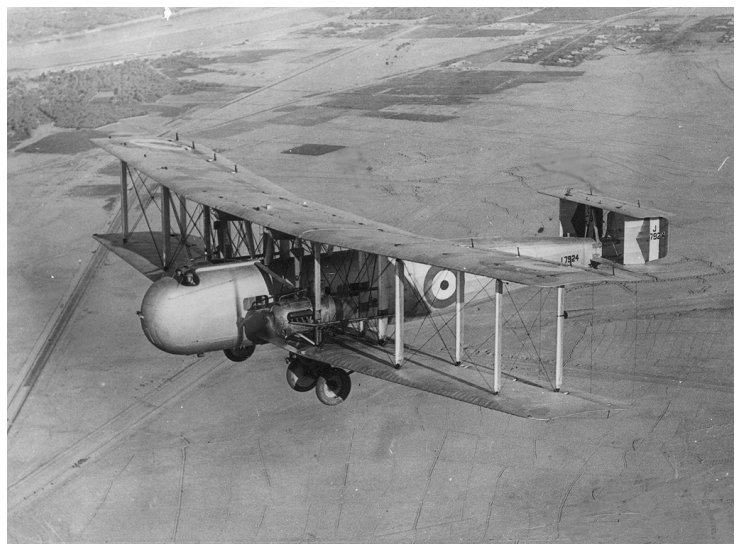
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ctesiphon>

Vickers\_Victoria troop carrier up to 1935 Capacity 22 troops:

*Note: from Wikipedia*

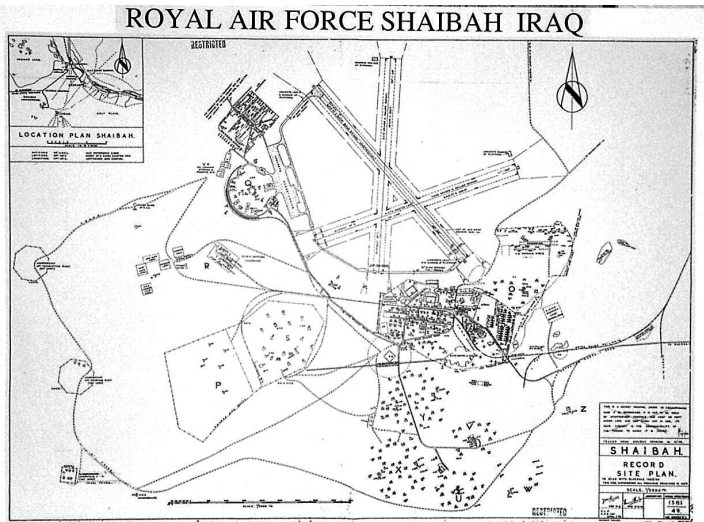
And the pilots experienced quite a lot of fresh air, as they did not have an enclosed cockpit.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers\\_Victoria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Victoria)



# RAF Shaibah

It was established by the Royal Air Force in 1920 as RAF Shaibah, the resident squadron was No. 84 Squadron RAF until 1940 when No. 244 Squadron RAF took over. No 244 Sqn was involved in the Rashid Ali rebellion on 1941. RAF Station Shaibah was a small and primitive airfield in the desert with a harsh hot and humid climate. Iraqi Air Force use  
 In 1956 it was handed over to the Iraqi Air Force, and it then became an Iraqi Air Force airfield until 2003.  
 Current use  
 Today, refurbished and known as Shaibah Airport, used by light private planes



Written on the back:  
*"D.F Station & Golf course Shiabab 1933"*

Written on the back *"Crash at Shiabab 1933"*



Written on the back:  
*Mohameden burial ground at Zubaire 1933*

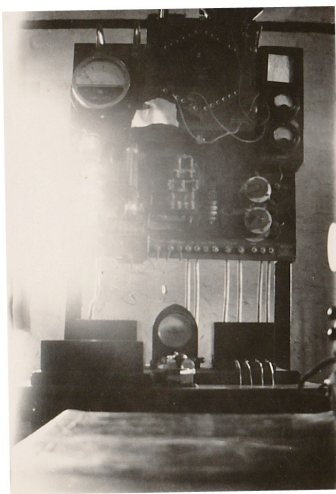
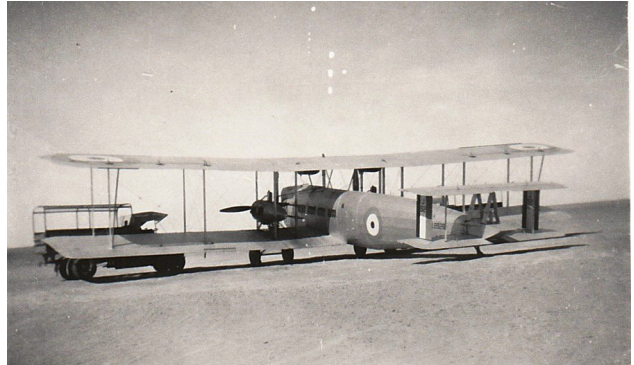
Written on the back:  
*Bedouine woman getting firewood Zubaire Sept 1933*  
 Note: The month of September is wrong, he was still in the UK then! November is more correct. BUT it was not his handwriting.....





Written on back: "Levi's Iraqi soldiers, guard at Shiabab 1933"

Written on back:  
"Vickers Virginia Shiabab November 1933"



Written on back:  
"Transmitter T.19.B at Shiabab 1933"

Written on back:  
"With love, Wilf December 22nd 1933"



Written on back :  
*Twin sisters at Ashar Iraq Sept 1933*  
Note: Al Ashar is an Iraqi city located on the Shatt al-Arab in Basrah.



Written on back:  
"The market place in Zubaire 1933"

Az Zubayr is a city in Basra Governorate in Iraq, just south of Basra. The name can also refer to the old Emirate of Zubair. The name is also sometimes written Az Zubair, Zubair, Zoubair, El Zubair, or Zobier.





## From 10th November 1933 to 203 (FB) Squadron, Basra

203 was a Flying Boat Squadron, using Short.8/8 Rangoons based at RAF Basra just 7 miles or 11 kms from RAF Shaibah. Flying boats could only take off or land on water but the wheels were only used to be pulled up the slipway for repairs. He was to have 700 flying hours with this Squadron as Wireless Op aircrew.



The Short S.8/8 Rangoon was a 1930s British three-engined biplane flying boat, designed and built by Short Brothers for the Royal Air Force. In 1929, the Royal Air Force needed urgent replacements of the Supermarine Southampton IIs then operated by No. 203 Squadron RAF based at Basra, Iraq. The new RAF version had Shorts designation S.8/8 and RAF designation Rangoon, and three examples were initially ordered. The Rangoon was a straightforward military adaptation of the Calcutta. The main structure was assembled from duralumin formers, spars, ribs and stringers; the fuselage was skinned with duralumin, and the flying surfaces were partly skinned and partly fabric-covered. The major changes were the provision of an enclosed cockpit for the pilots, rest bunks, enlarged fuel tanks in the upper wing, three Lewis guns (one mounted forward of the cockpit, and two in the fuselage behind the wings), underwing bomb racks, and a large fresh water tank (for intended use in tropical conditions)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short\\_Rangoon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_Rangoon)



1931, the first three Rangoons were delivered to the RAF for training at Felixstowe, then in April 1931 they were flown in formation to No. 203 Squadron RAF at Basra. They were used for surveying and anti-smuggling patrols over Iraq and the Persian Gulf. Over the following three years, three more Rangoons (built to a higher specification R.19/31) were delivered to No. 203 Squadron at Basra, where they served without problem until 1935, when they were replaced by Short Singapore IIIs.[2] In September and October 1934, three Rangoons of No. 203 Squadron visited Australia as part of the celebrations of the centenary of the state of Victoria and of the centenary of Melbourne.

Crew: five

Length: 66 ft 9½ in (20.35 m) - Wingspan: 93 ft (28.35 m) - Height: 23 ft 9 in (7.24 m) - Wing area: 1,828 sq ft (169.8 m)

Empty weight: 14,000 lb (6,350 kg) - Loaded weight: 22,500 lb (10,206 kg) - Powerplant: 3 × Bristol Jupiter XIF, 540 hp (403 kW)

Maximum speed: 100 knots (115 mph, 185 km/h) - Cruise speed: 83 knots (92 mph, 148 km/h) - Range: 565 nm (650 miles, 1046 km) - Service ceiling: 12,000 ft (3,658 m) - Rate of climb: 550 ft/min (2.8 m/s) - Endurance: 7 hrs at 92 mph

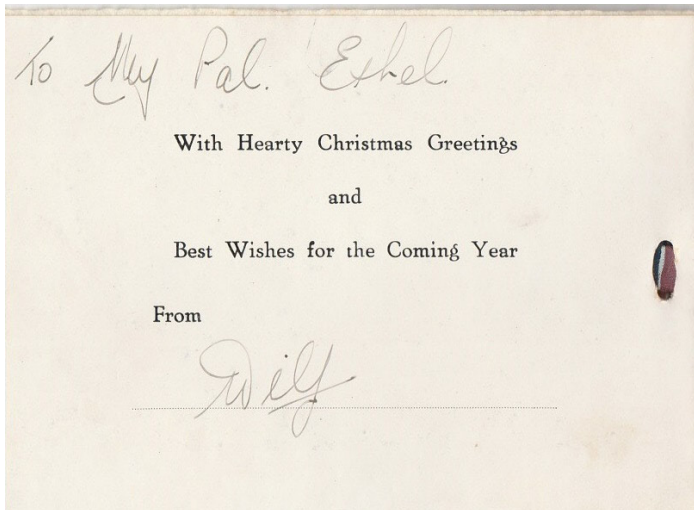


Written on back:  
 "Short Rangoon Muscat"

Note: from his service records he was admitted to the hospital in Muscat on the 26.5.1934

Written on back: "Ras al-Khaimah"

Ras Al Khaimah is the northernmost emirate of the United Arab Emirates. It's known for its Arabian Gulf beaches. In the capital city of the same name, the National Museum of Ras Al Khaimah occupies a centuries-old fort. The museum features regional history and archaeological exhibits.



RANGOON FLYING BOAT.

"To My Pal Ethel"



Xmas Dinner 1933

- Tomato Cremé Soup
- Fried Fish Cutlets
- Potato Crisps
- Roast Turkey
- Pork with Apple Sauce
- Roast and Mashed Potatoes
- Peas. Cauliflower and Stuffing
- Xmas Pudding & Brandy Sauce
- Mince Pies: Cheese and Biscuits
- Oranges, Nuts, Apples, Bananas
- Cigarettes
- DRINKSH etc

# 203 (FB) Squadron Orchestra 1934



Note: Dad seated far left

1st Extra	Fox Trot	<i>I'd like to go back</i>
No. 1	One Step	<i>Mr. Wa</i>
No. 2	Waltz	<i>Sweetheart of Had River Valley</i>
No. 3	Fox Trot	<i>Isle of Capri</i>
No. 4		<i>Selected</i>
No. 5	S. Fox Trot	<i>Little man you've had a busy day</i>
2nd Extra	Fox Trot	<i>See, oh, gosh</i>
No. 6	Waltz	<i>You have taken my heart</i>
No. 7	One Step	<i>Sing a new Song</i>
No. 8		<i>Selected</i>
No. 9	Fox Trot	<i>Aloha</i>
No. 10	Fox Trot	<i>Shuffle off to Buffalo</i>
3rd Extra	Waltz	<i>Good night little girl</i>
4th Extra	S. Fox Trot	<i>No more heartaches</i>



"Shuffle off to Buffalo" 1934

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMdEqB-TB8g>

"Goodnight Little Girl" 1933

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fady0km41Q>



Written on back "Ethel M, With Love from Wilf"

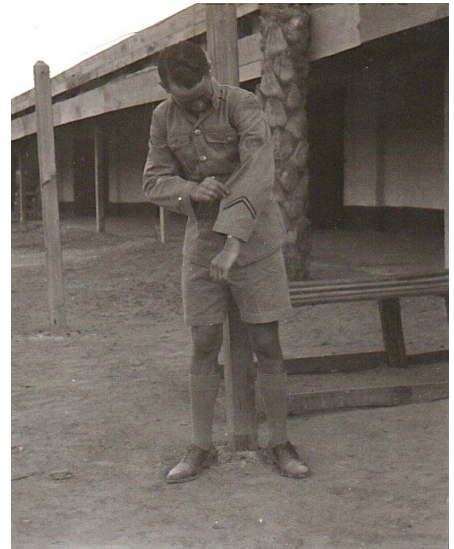
Note: Dad second from left



Written on back:  
"203 Sqdn's Orchestra 1934. Bradbury, Castle, Men, Self, J.E.Pester"

Written on back: "3 years of undetected  
crime"

Note: from his service record: "Good  
Conduct Badge (1st) Award 14.9.34"



Written on back: "Who's Drunk?"



Written on back:  
"To my Pen-Pal Eitel (Boys and girls of  
A, Xmas 1934)"



Written on the back  
*"Imperial Airways, Snabab  
The Hengist"*

So googling this it came up with this, showing this particular aircraft (a Handley Page H.P.42 with a crew of 4 and 24 passengers) So this is what it was like to fly on the "long-range Eastern routes" then, 85 years ago! This is the actual "Hengist" on film (black and white, no sound).....

*A trip to Cairo by Imperial Airways 1931-33* <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/3284>

and the H.P.42 with passengers (black and white with background music from the 1930's) .....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzGCZLUI9FE>

The history of the H.P.42 and Imperial Airways.....[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handley\\_Page\\_H.P.42](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handley_Page_H.P.42)

Waiting for the next aircraft  
*Note: Unknown date*



Written on back:  
*"Very Ancient and Modern, Iraqi Air Force"*

Well they were modern 85 years ago!

Hawker Hart fitted with the Bristol Pegasus IIM2 radial piston engine, plus ten aircraft fitted with the Pegasus VIP8 radial piston engine; 34 built for Iraq.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawker\\_Hart#Audax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawker_Hart#Audax)



Written on back: "Desert Policeman"

*Note:* Dad told me many years ago that they met each other in the desert quite by chance, and it turned out that he came from Sheffield not too far from Ashby where he came from.

Written on back: "The Golden Dome of Khadimian  
(Holy city of Iraq)"

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4738472.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4738472.stm)



Written on back: "Tough Eh?"



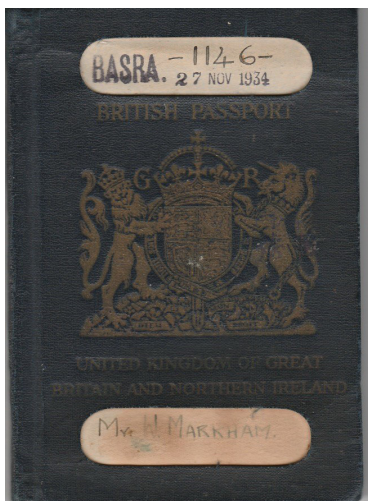
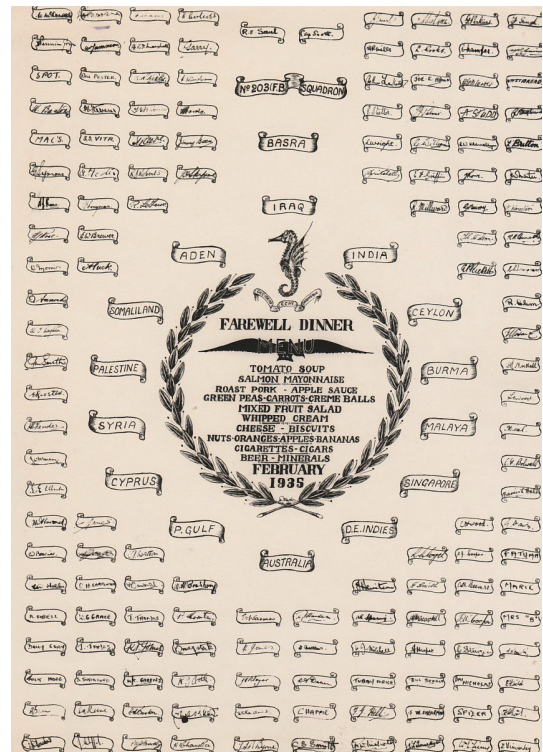
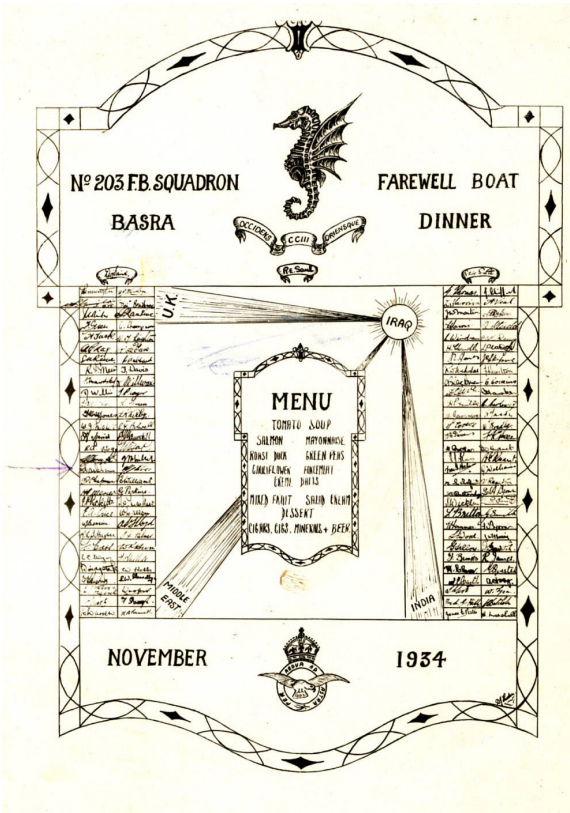
Written on back: "Muscat"

Note: "From 203 Squadron history. the In 1931 the squadron re-equipped with Rangoons and in 1935 with Singapores, the latter being taken to Aden in September of that year during the Abyssinian crisis"

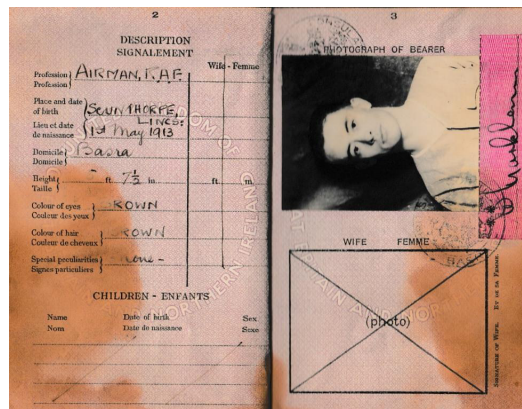
Farewell Boat Dinner November 1934 (left) and 1935 (below).  
Could this be the farewell dinner for the Rangoon Flying Boats?

I have always wondered how the transfer of Rangoons to Singapores took place. Could it have been that that they were fown back to England and replaced by the Singapores there?

Or it could be that in September and October 1934, three Rangoons of No. 203 Squadron visited Australia as part of the celebrations of the centenary of the state of Victoria and of the centenary of Melbourne.



His first passport was issued on the 2th November 1934 issued in Basra, and there are 14 visa stamped entries, all in Arabic, until the last one a visa from the Greece Legation in London stamped 14 January 1936 - "Visa Diplomatique"



# From 15th September 1935, 203 (FB) Squadron to Aden

APPENDIX "B".

NOMINAL ROLL OF PERSONNEL

OP. No. 203 (FB) 1935

PROCEEDING TO... ADEN Via BOMBAY.

PER... VASNA

SAILING FROM BASRAH ON... 15th September 1935

Authority:... RAF Manual N.466

Dated... 15. 9. 35

Number	Rank	Name	Trade	Remarks
340938	Capt.	JAMES,	R. Clerk G.D.4.	
565423	L.A.C.	RUDD,	T.H. Inst. Maker.1.	
510609	L.A.C.	SMITH,	P.W. Armourer. 2.	
513506	L.A.C.	SMITH,	G.S. Armourer. 2.	
614791	L.A.C.	HARRIS,	P.H. Keeper. 3.	
512751	A.C.I.	STUDD,	A. C & Sut. 3.	
516040	A.C.I.	WATCHBOUR,	K. Photo. 2.	
569430	L.A.C.	CHARLTON,	L. Elec. 1.	
563833	L.A.C.	GOODWIN,	P. W.O.M. 1.	
515222	A.C.I.	MARSHAM,	W. W.Opr. 2.	

*[Signature]*  
OFFICER COMMANDING  
No. 203 (FB) SQUADRON  
R.A.F. BASRAH

P.T.O.

Nominal Roll of personnel of 203 (FB) Squadron proceeding to Aden via Bombay per. S.S. Vasna sailing from Basrah on A.M 15th September 1935.

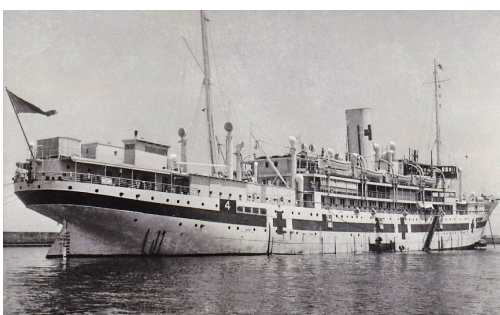
Written on back:  
"She'll be in sight any minuet now"  
15th Sept. 1935



Written on back:  
"Bomber sees her"



Written on back: "Here she comes"  
SS VASNA 15 Sept 1935



Here in 1941, 6 years later as a Hospital Ship.

Built by Alexander Stephen & Sons Glasgow, Yard No 465, in 1917 as a Passenger Cargo Vessel for the British India Steam Navigation Company, Glasgow & London. Sold for scrapping at Blyth 2/4/1951





This is the route the British India Steam Navigation Company would have take from Basra to Aden via Bombay. Note that Iraq was part of the Ottoman Empire so the map is before 1918.

<http://www.theshipsl.com/ships/lines/bisn.shtml>

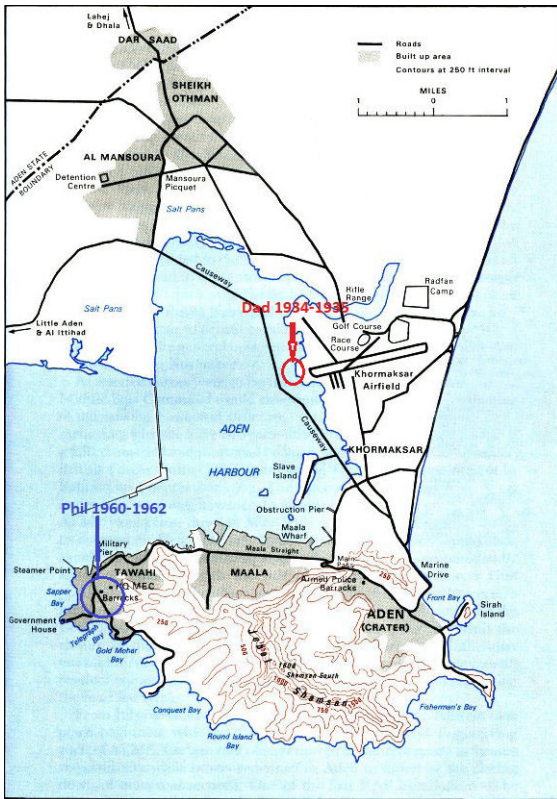


Written on the back  
*"Singapore Flying boat up  
 the slipway for repairs"*



Dad had not written on the back of the photo that it was in Aden, but I was in Aden on a 2 year posting with the RAF (from 1960 to 1962) and the colour photo was taken from the same position, 33 years later, from the end of the the runway at RAF Khormakser which was the MTB air/sea rescue quay in 1967. The view is towards the township of Maalla, as it was then, and you can clearly see the mountain range is the same.

Thank you for the FB group Aden "All Ex Services & Civilians who spent time in Aden" for the photo!.



The location where he took the photo “Singapore Flying boat up the slipway for repairs” was taken from the end of the runway (circled in red, on the map) and I was stationed at RAF Steamer Point, circled in blue, lower left of the map.

One of the differences between 1935 and my time there, was that then there was no accommodation at the Khormaksar airfield (or aerodrome as he would have said it), and so he was billeted on Chapel Hill at Steamer Point, which is exactly the same place as I stayed for the my first year..

This is a photo I took in 1960, and shows the barracks on Chapel Hill (in the background) and the newer ones in the foreground had been recently built when I arrived and they were air-conditioned.

The Chapel Hill barracks were very old (pre First World War) and was from the time of the Indian Army in Aden. The barracks were cooled by huge fans in the ceiling and a wonderful breeze from the sea! There were 2 floors in each block with 25+ in the main room, and the lucky ones chose a bed on the front or rear balcony.

Dad remembered the Chapel Hill barracks very well which was 26 years before these photos were taken.



I took these photos in 1960 shortly after I arrived. and showed the lucky occupants of, in this case, the front balcony, and the second is of the “Dohbi Wallah” balancing a large load of washing on his head on his way down Chapel Hill.

From a posting on the Facebook group RAF Steamer Point “We left our Dhobi wrapped up in a towel, at the foot of our beds each morning. Around 5pm the Dhobi staggering under a huge bundle on his back, delivered it. Washed and starched. I still remember my Dhobi symbols. The billet had a Somali Bearer and his Chico. They made the beds, cleaned the floors, polished our shoes, and brass cap badges. Not forgetting selling tea coffee and biscuits and running errands to the shop at the foot of the hill.

For all this each of us paid five shillings per fortnight. The Dhobi also cost five (East African) shillings a fortnight.”

Dad would have experienced all this as well.



Written on the back "*High Street Aden*" 1935 and looked exactly the same 26 years later!. The photo was taken looking towards Crater from the Maalla entrance.

Mum had written on the bottom of this newspaper cutting "*Wilf waving the flag*" It must be Aden as well because it was taken at the same spot as the previous photo. Unfortunately the newspaper article is unknown.

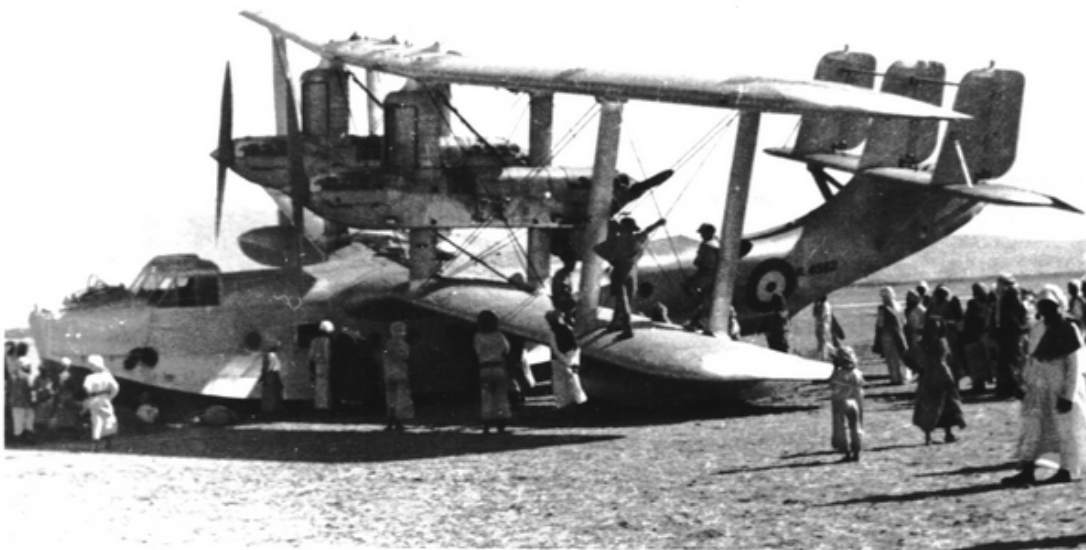
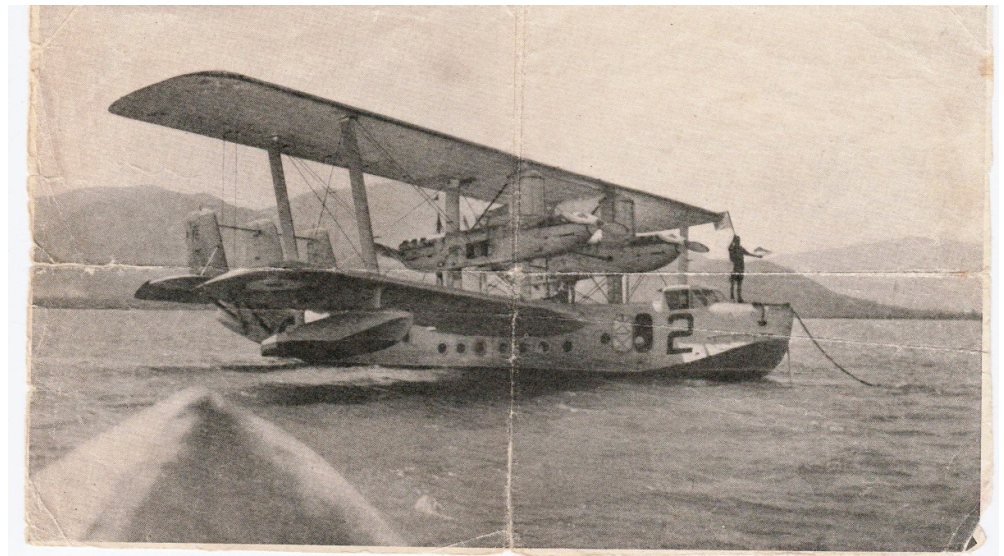
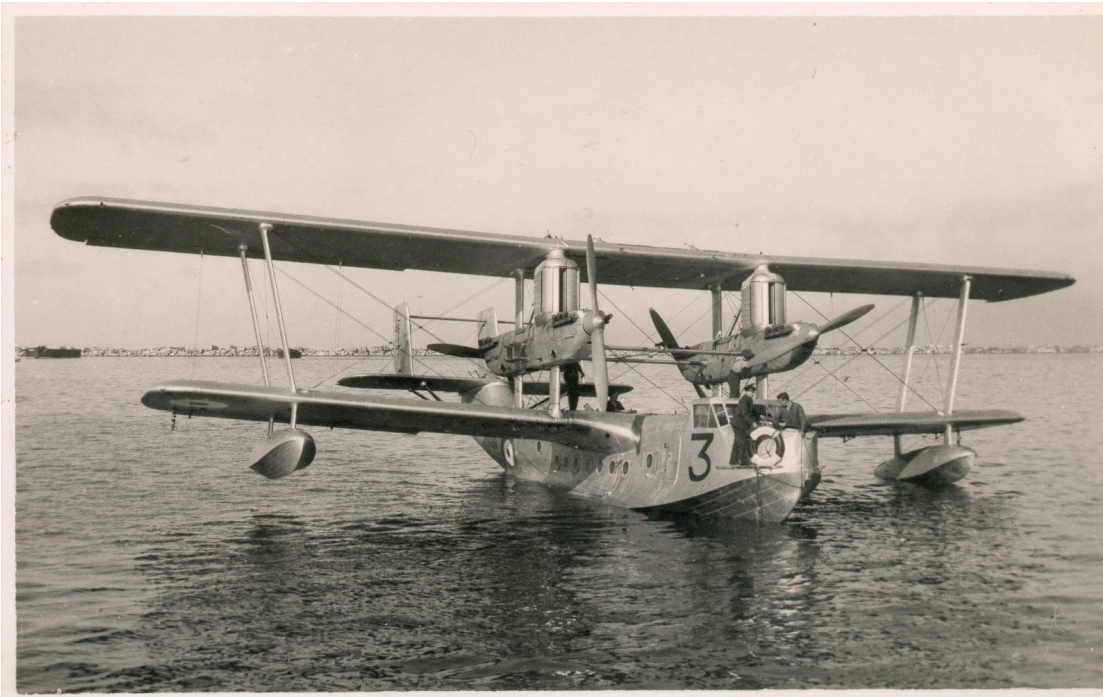


Photo Singapore 33: Embarrassing situation for K4582 while serving with 203 sqn at Aden. Nothing is known about the circumstances which obliged the pilot to make a force-landing on the sand. This incident is even not written on its movement card, but it is sure is that it was able to be repaired to flying condition. However, the next time, returning to the UK, it would run of luck and was unable to complete the journey, which was stopped in Italy.



In 1935 203 (FB) squadron was equipped with Singapores, being taken to Aden in September of that year during the Abyssinian crisis.

### S.19 / Singapore III

A development of the Singapore II powered by four Rolls-Royce Kestrel IX engines and equipped with triple fins. 37 were built.

These aircraft, the Singapore III (manufacturer's designation Short S.19), had all-metal hulls and fabric-covered metal flying surfaces. They were powered by four 675 hp (503 kW) Rolls-Royce Kestrel IX mounted between the wings in two tandem push-pull pairs, similar to the Singapore IIs. The crew of six was located in a central cabin and fore, aft, and midships open gun positions (Vickers machine gun or Lewis gun). A long-range fuel tank could be carried externally on the dorsal hull. The first Singapore III flew on 15 June 1934. Although obsolescent by the time the first aircraft entered service with 210 Squadron in January 1935, the type arrived just in time to benefit from the arms race of the late 1930s and 37 were built. Production terminated in June 1937.

#### General characteristics

Crew: six

Length: 64 ft 2 in (19.56 m)

Wingspan: 90 ft (27.43 m)

Height: 23 ft 7 in (7.19 m)

Wing area: 1,465 sq ft (136.1 m<sup>2</sup>)

Empty weight: 20,364 lb (9,237 kg)

Loaded weight: 28,160 lb (12,773 kg)

Max. takeoff weight: 32,390 lb (14,692 kg)

Powerplant: 4 × Rolls-Royce Kestrel VIII/IX piston (pusher/tractor configuration), 675 hp (503 kW) each

#### Performance

Maximum speed: 136 mph (118 knots, 219 km/h) (at 5,000 ft and normal weight)

Cruise speed: 123 mph (107 knots, 198 km/h)

Range: 1,000 mi[7] (870 nmi, 1,610 km)

Endurance: 6 hours 15 minutes

Service ceiling: 15,000 ft (4,570 m)

Rate of climb: 700 ft/min (3.6 m/s)

#### Armament

Guns: Up to three 0.303 in (7.7 mm) Lewis guns

Bombs: Up to 1,100 pounds (500 kg) of bombs under wings.



Short Singapore Mk.II K3582, No.205 Sqn, Satefor (Singapore), 1935.  
The camouflage and marking of the first series of the Singapores were rather simple with only the RAF roundels in the six standard oval form, and the serial painted on the fuselage repeated under the wings in opposite directions (see photo 24). 205 Sqn used a non-standard code to identify its Singapores inside the squadron: the symbols of the four seat built K3582 getting a black Club - see photo p.16.



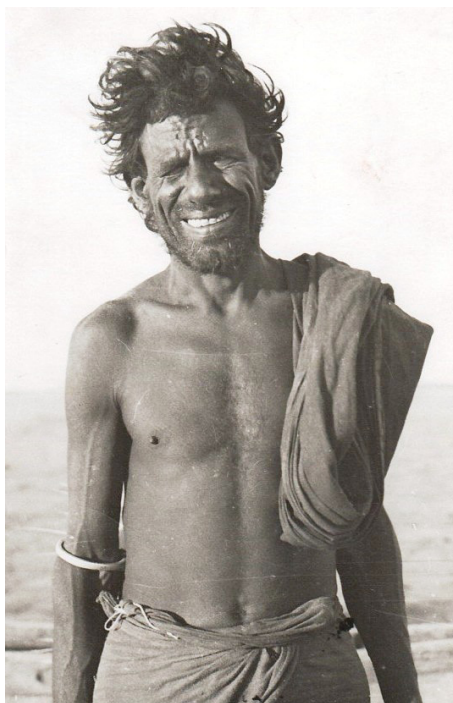
Short Singapore Mk.II K3585, No.205 Sqn, Satefor (Singapore), 1935.  
See K3582 caption for more details and photo p.16.



Short Singapore Mk.II K3583, No.210 Sqn, Pembroke Dock, 1935.  
The presence of a Seahorse and the inscription "Océanica Océanographique" below the cockpit suggests that K3583 was used by 203 Sqn (the squadron being the symbol of this unit, something never officially sanctioned). The presence of such a marking is not explained, and can be only provisional and applied during the ferry flight to the Far East for delivery to 205 Sqn while making a stopover in the Middle East where 203 Sqn was stationed.

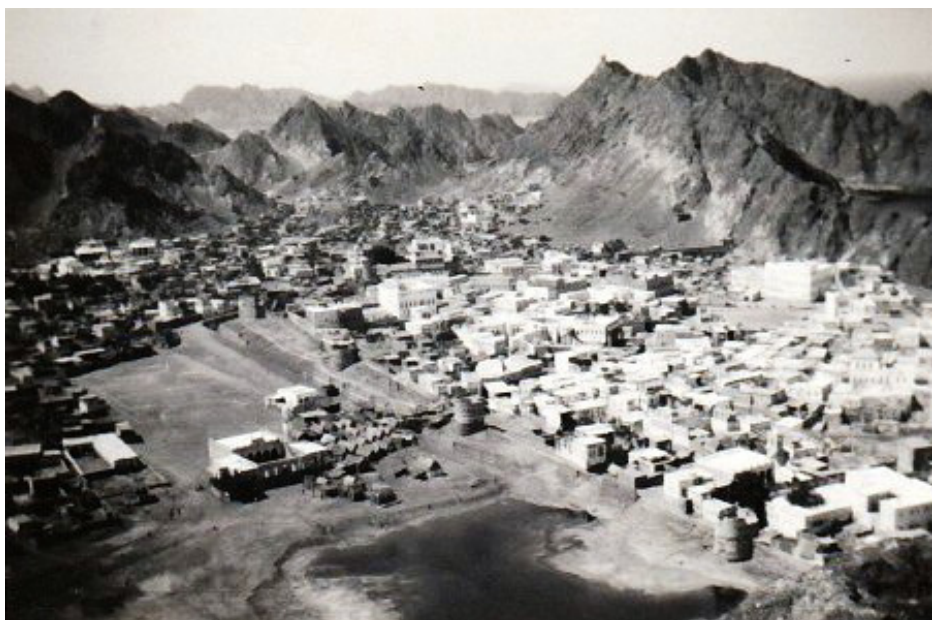


Written on the back: *A camel caravan at rest near Aden town*



Written on the back: *Typical Aden Fisherman  
Fishermen and their boat*

Written on the back: *The town itself. The big white building on the right Sultans Palace*



# From 203 (FB) Squadron Aden to 28 (AC) Squadron RAF Ambala India 4 April 1936



We know that he was granted a visa from the Greece Legation in London stamped 14 January 1936 - "Visa Diplomatique", and it would appear that he was granted leave in England. at that time.

There is no mention of this in his service records but Mum has written 1936 on the first photograph we have of them together and it certainly looks like winter time!

They must have been pen-pals as we can see from the first photos "*To My Pal Ethel*" in 1933 to "*To my Pen-Pal Ethel (Boys and girls of A, Xmas 1934)*" and to "*Ethel M, With Love from Wilf*" (Note: Ethel May Burrell)

It's all there!



The 2 families certainly knew each other, to the right, the 2 mothers together Ethel Burrell neé Gill (b. 1886) and Betsy Markham neé Clark (b. 1885).

I have not been able to ascertain the date this was taken, but I had originally thought it was about 1934 but that could be wrong.

Both this and the photo below were definitely taken before 1937 as Betsy died in December that year.



Photo taken in Cleethorpes. Mum's writing below:

From left to right

Mum (Betsy), Eve (Dad' sister), Babs (Mum's nickname) Dad (James Markham (b. 1881), Bill Pennington (?))

## 28 (AC) Squadron RAF Ambala India 4 April 1936



From his leave in England at the beginning of the year, Mum was always with him - 2 photographs on the wall by his bed!



RAF station Ambala is 202 kms (125 miles) to the North of New Dehli

*Ambala is a city and a municipal corporation in Ambala district in the state of Haryana, India, located on the border with the Indian state of Punjab.*

Note: This is a modern map, and in 1936 there would be no state of Pakistan before Independence in 1947 and is close to the North West Frontier and border to Afghanistan. Punjab was divided in two in 1947 and therefore on this map it shows Punjab on both sides of the border.



Inter war years

The squadron was disbanded on 20 January 1920 at RAF Eastleigh however on 1 April 1920 it was reformed at RAF Ambala with the Bristol F2b Fighter. During the 1920s and 30's it was moved to various bases within India and operated different aircraft including changing to the Westland Wapiti during September 1931 and the Hawker Audax during June 1936.

The Audax was a 2 seater light bomber, and the AC stands for "Army Cooperation" so his 700 logged flying hours were now over, and his Wireless Op skills were used on the ground to air signalling from the RAF station and supporting ground troops in the field on the North West Frontier



Written on the back:  
*28 Squadron Ambala June 1936  
 Central Punjab India*

The Hawker Audax was based very heavily on the Hawker Hart light bomber, designed for army co-operation, seeing much service in the British Empire. The first Audax flew in late 1931 and over 700 Audaxes were produced (including export). The Audax was similar to the Hart, though had some modifications, these including the installation of a long exhaust pipe, designed to reduce the impact of glare on the pilot, and the addition of a message pick-up hoop under the fuselage. The Audax was armed with a single .303 in (7.7 mm) Lewis light machine gun and a .303 in (7.7 mm) Vickers machine gun. The Audax was powered by a version of the Kestrel engine and had a maximum speed of 170 mph (274 km/h). A number of variants of the Audax were produced, including the Audax India, a tropicalised version of the Audax for service in India and the Audax Singapore for service there

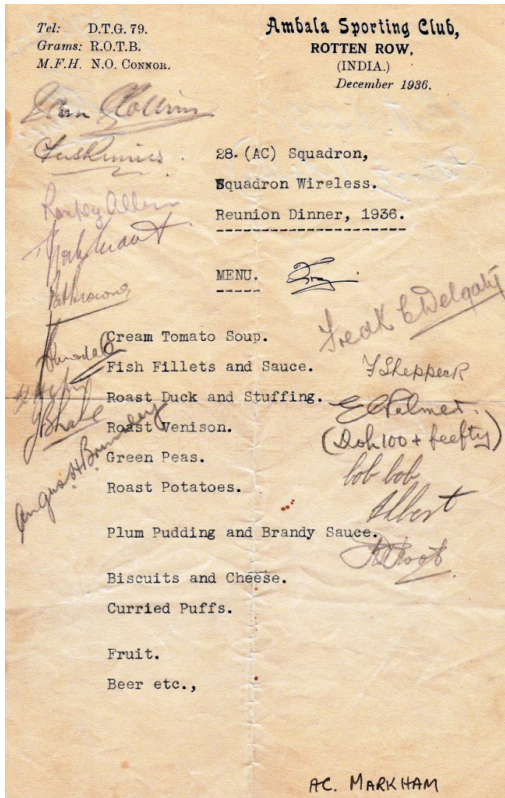
- Engine: Rolls-Royce Kestrel IB
- Horsepower: 530
- Max Speed: 170mph at 2,400ft
- Ceiling: 21,500ft
- Endurance: 3 hours 30 minutes
- Span: 37ft 3in
- Length: 29ft 7in
- Armament: Two 0.303in machine guns, one forward firing and one in aft cockpit.
- Bomb load: Four 20lb bombs or two 112lb supply containers under wings.

Written on the back:  
*55 Squadron Hinadi in formation*

RAF Hinadi was based near Baghdad in Iraq, but the same aircraft type.







Ambala Sporting Club December 1936  
 28 (AC) Squadron  
 Squadron Wireless Reunion Dinner

Written on back:  
 "Me"



Written on back: Ambala Cantonment Punjab India  
 1936

Note: Cantonment

Noun

a military garrison or camp.

Historical a permanent military station in British India.



The Cantonment is from the British times as it lies at an important junction, from here one can take the road North to Chandigarh and onwards to Simla, or turn East towards Uttar Pradesh, or go west to Ludhiana, and onwards to Jalandhar and Amritsar - Lahore. Ambala Cantt is also very famous for manufacturing scientific lab types of equipment.

Ambala Cantonment railway station.

It is a prominent junction and is located on the Grand Trunk Road. Just across the railway station is the bus stand. It is the main terminal that connects all railway stations from south, east, west, north.

British Raj

It has a lot of colonial bungalows and wide tree lined roads typical of British Cantonments in the subcontinent. It also gets a mention in the Rudyard Kipling book Kim. The formation sign of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh Area (earlier Punjab Area) located here (a Taurus on a Red background) is a theme in the book. The formation sign still exists for an Indian Army formation in Shimla with some units affiliated to it still using the sign in Ambala.

European Cemetery Historic Ambala European Cemetery is located here.

History of Ambala

Another historical version says that the name is a corruption of Amba Wala or the mango-village judging from mango groves that existed in its immediate neighborhood. Still another story is that the District has taken its name after goddess "Bhavani Amba" who's Temple still exists in the Ambala city.

Indian Army & Airforce Base

It is currently the Headquarters of II Corps (India), (raised in 1970, formation sign Kharga) and an important forward Indian Air Force base. It played an important role during 1965 and 1971 war between India and Pakistan

The climate in Ambala is warm and temperate. In winter, there is much more rainfall in Ambala than in summer. The Köppen-Geiger climate classification is Csa. The average annual temperature in Ambala is 24.5 °C. The rainfall here averages 919 mm.

No. 957

**DES RAJ & SONS,**  
Engravers, Watch Repairers & New Watch Sellers,  
Lalkurti Bazar, RAWALPINDI. & JHIKA GALLI, (Murree)

Name *A. G. Markham*

No. of Watch *149989*

Date of admission *27/8/36*

Price of repair *2/12/-*

**N. B.**—Please sign on the back, if you want to get your watch by another man.

Ambala 27.8.1936

Note: One memento in which we know the exact date.  
And the N.B at the bottom "Please sign on the back, if you want to get your watch by another man"



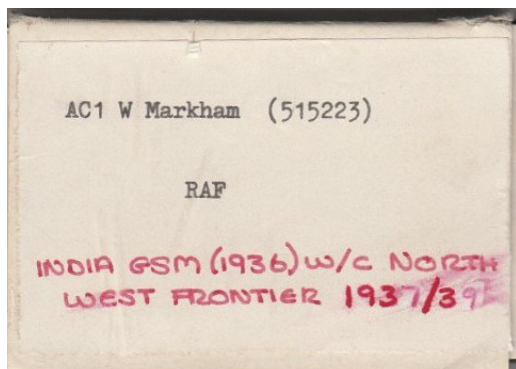
Written on the back:  
*Afternoon idiocities*



Sports day at RAF Ambala



# North West Frontier 1937/38



*Note:* This is the medal he was awarded in 1939 and was dispatched to him in 1943 but “was returned to safe custody as you had moved from that address” He eventually received the medal and clasp after writing to the RAF Personnel Management Centre at the Ministry of Defence on the 3rd of May 1983. It had been in their “safe custody” for 40 years! He wrote the letter in 1983 only after great pressure from his eldest son to do so. A copy of this letter can be seen at the end of this “booklet”.

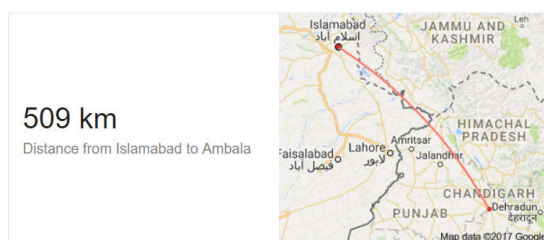
Clasp: “North West Frontier 1937-39”

*To all officers and men, authorised public and private followers and civilian personnel borne on the strength of a unit or formation and to police and other civilian personnel who rendered full time active service:—*

*(a) Between midnight 15th/16th December, 1937 and midnight 31st December, 1938 / 1st January, 1939; within the geographical limits:—*

*From the junction of the Indo-Afghan frontier and the tribal boundary 12 miles west of Thal in Kurram eastward along the tribal boundary but exclusive of Thal; thence south-eastwards along the tribal boundary to its junction with the boundary between Kohat and Bannu Civil districts; thence south-eastwards along the civil district boundary to its junction with the Punjab boundary; thence northward and eastward along the Punjab boundary where it meets the river Indus (Mullawali); thence southward along the river Indus, including Mari Indus, to the boundary between Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan civil districts (Mungar); thence westward along this boundary to its junction with the Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province boundary (Chitarwata); thence northward and westward along the inter-provincial boundary to its junction with the Indo-Afghan frontier 10 miles west of Gul Kach; thence northward along the frontier to its junction with the tribal boundary 12 miles west of Thal in Kurram; and/or.....*

There were 30 different Regiments or Corps that served here during this time thus entitled to this General service Medal, RAF incl.



This is of course a post-1947 map showing Pakistan which was India in 1938.

The following photographs are from his album and the notes taken at the time.

He was with the British and Sikh troops on the ground communicating by morse to the his Squadron flying overhead. This is the AC in the 28 Squadron - Army Co-operation.

I know he travelled sometimes by train as he told me some hair raising stories of the train being attacked.

A very brief history of the North West Frontier from Wikipedia:

*The North-West Frontier (present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) region of the British Indian Empire was the most difficult area to conquer in South Asia, strategically and militarily. [citation needed] It remains the western frontier of present-day Pakistan, extending from the Pamir Knot in the north to the Koh-i-Malik Siab in the west, and separating the modern Pakistani frontier regions of North-West Frontier Province (renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Balochistan from neighbouring Afghanistan in the west. The borderline between is officially known as the Durand Line and divides Pashtun inhabitants of these provinces from Pashtuns in eastern Afghanistan.*

*The two main gateways on the North West Frontier are the Khyber and Bolan Passes. Since ancient times, the Indian subcontinent has been repeatedly invaded through these northwestern routes. With the expansion of the Russian Empire into Central Asia in the twentieth century, stability of the Frontier and control of Afghanistan became cornerstones of defensive strategy for British India.*

*Much of the Frontier was occupied by Ranjit Singh in the early 19th century, and then taken over by the East India Company when it annexed the Punjab in 1849.*

*Between 1849 and 1947 the military history of the frontier was a succession of punitive expeditions against offending Pashtun (or Pathan) tribes, punctuated by three wars against Afghanistan. Many British officers who went on to distinguished command in the First and Second World Wars learnt their soldiering on the North-West Frontier, which they called the Grim.*



<https://mapcarta.com/14708914/Map>

Written on the back:  
*On the road from Ladha  
 to Chalweshi on the NWFP 20 miles from the  
 Kyber Pass*

Ladha is a subdivision in South Waziristan, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, located between Wanna and Razmak.

Ladha is considered a Taliban stronghold. In November 2009, the Pakistani army launched an attack on Ladha, which killed 30 militants and wounded eight soldiers.

Chalweshi is within Pakistan and is north-east of Sholam and east of Paltoke and Koti Raghzai. Chalweshi has an elevation of 1,973 metres.

Written on the back:  
*Digging ourselves in at Chalweshi*



The Waziristan campaign 1936–39 comprised a number of operations conducted in Waziristan by British and Indian forces against the fiercely independent tribesmen that inhabited this region. These operations were conducted in 1936–1939, when operations were undertaken against followers of the mysterious Fakir of Ipi, a religious and political agitator who was spreading anti-British sentiment in the region and undermining the prestige of the Indian government in Waziristan at the time.



Written on the back: *Gurkha machine gunners.  
 Half Indian half Mongol Wonderful soldiers*



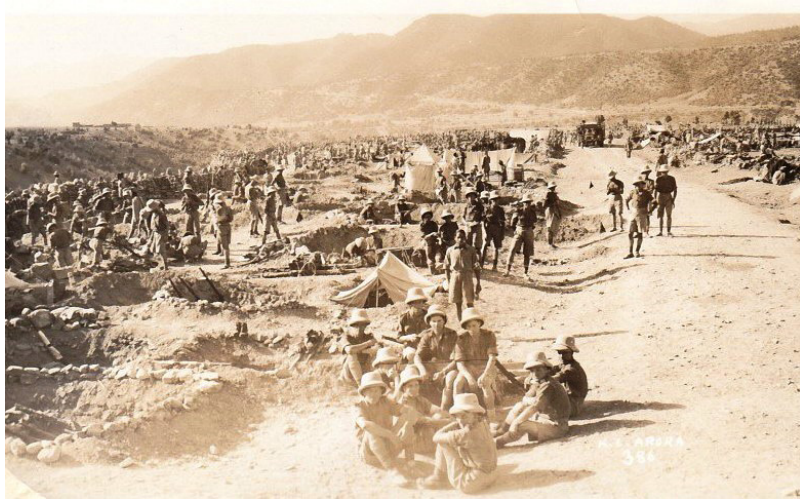
Written on the back:  
*Royal Corps of Signals heliographing*

Written on the back:  
*Northants machine gun post in action at Chalweshti Khassadar post*



Written on the back:  
*Khassadars or tribesmen that what the government want to know*

Thus the Wana **Khassadars** would work independently while the Mahsud **Khassadars** in the north would work in close co-operation with regulars. Sir Dennis Bray, Foreign Secretary of the Indian government in 1923, was to say of the Khassadar, 'his duties are not confined to Watch and Ward: he is the tribal man of all work. Trying to run the frontier without **Khassadars** would be like trying to run the Ruhr without German police or petty officials.'<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it was envisaged by some that the idea should evolve beyond its rather 'rough and ready' roots into something akin to the Frontier Constabulary, with provisions for housing, education, training, promotion and a controlling inspectorate to supervise recruitment and administration.

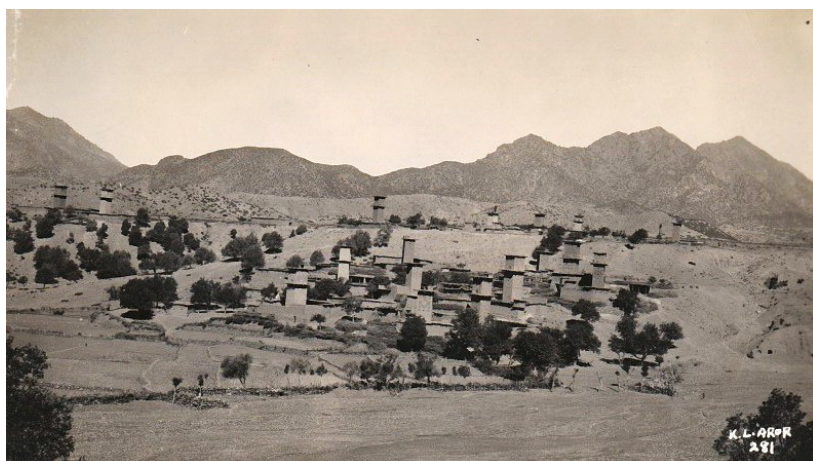


Written on the back:  
*Torvam camp Northamptonshire Regiment*

Written on the back: *Typical native village in Mabsud territory. Note watch towers Here Ali's home cousin of Faqir of Ipi*

Mirza Ali Khan (Urdu/Pashto: born 1897, died 1960), known as the Faqir of Ipi, was a Pashtun

The village of Ipi is located near Mirali Camp in North Waziristan Agency, Waziristan, from where the Faqir of Ipi started his guerrilla warfare against the British Empire throughout the 1930s and 1940s until the British departure in 1947.



Written on the back:  
*Sikb light mountain battery ready for action*



Written on back:  
*Chalweshti Camp July 24th 1937 North West Frontier Province*

207852 at 0823  
 To A.L.O.  
 Send to air.  
 Take action against  
 enemy reported 207852  
 at 0823 hr. 25 in number  
 L.M.  
 0853

Message from the ground troops to the 28 (AC) Hawker Audax asking for action against the enemy.

ROYAL AIR FORCE. Form 705.  
**PILOT'S REPORT.**  
 To: IK. Pilot's Serial Letter \_\_\_\_\_  
 at \_\_\_\_\_ (Code Area) Ref. Map \_\_\_\_\_  
 hours. Visibility \_\_\_\_\_

TIME	SERIAL No.	OBSERVATION
10.21	21	5 men running NORTH. No enemy seen in air. No report from ground. 2 men in air. 2 men WENT down. 2 men seen pair. L.M. H. H. H.
10.22	22	5 men running NORTH 729998 6 in 22. Thence only 2 men running NORTH

Reported to \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ hours.  
 (Code Area) at \_\_\_\_\_ hours.  
 From \_\_\_\_\_ Rank and Name. Squadron. Date.  
 (CODE NAME)  
 207056—W. 204877—200 Pals.—10.11—W. & S. C.A.—(7. 5878)

Pilot's report:

5 men running NORTH 129998 Gun a & 2 (undecipherable)  
 Thence only 2 men running NORTH

our party on the way  
 to Kohala on push bikes  
 1938  
 25 miles down hill from  
 Murree to Kohala  
 Back by lorry



In actual fact from Murree to Kohala Bridge is 41 kms or 25.5 miles. But then they were on “push bikes”!  
*Murree-Kohala road, the busiest and an important artery between Rawalpindi and Azad Kashmir, is in bad condition posing danger to the lives of commuters. Potholes, landslides and broken portion of the road create traffic logjams. Commuters stuck up in traffic mess for hours. Due to the dilapidated condition of the road frequent accidents are order of the day.*

*Residents of Murree and surrounding areas have demanded rehabilitation of the Murree-Kohala road.*

*They said the road, a major link between Rawalpindi-Islamabad and the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), was in dilapidated condition due to neglect of the provincial authorities.* Published in The Express Tribune, August 31st, 2015.

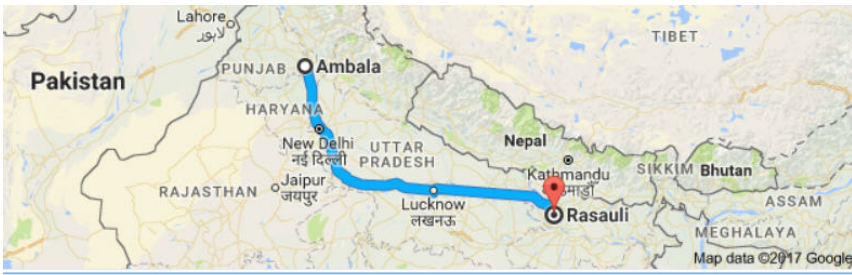
Murree is a colonial era town located on the Pir Panjal Range within the Murree Tehsil, Rawalpindi District in Punjab, Pakistan. It forms outskirts of Islamabad

Kohala is a town in Pakistan on the River Jhelum, north of Murree. The town was at the independence of Pakistan in 1947 a border town between newly created Pakistan and the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, but is today only the border between the rest of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir.



Written on back:  
 Halfway halt to Kohala who's that  
 funny man in sunglasses?

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/947845/bumpy-ride-murree-kohala-road-in-dilapidated-condition/>



17 h 45 min (1,196.8 km) via NH27

Now that was some journey in 1937/1938, although it was a Buick!  
 It takes almost 18 hours now (2017) so what was it like then?  
 Rasauli is close to the border to Nepal so they must have seen the Himalayas from there.  
 But why Rasauli?



Written on back: *Buick and Joe*

Written on back:  
*Joe and I at Rasauli*

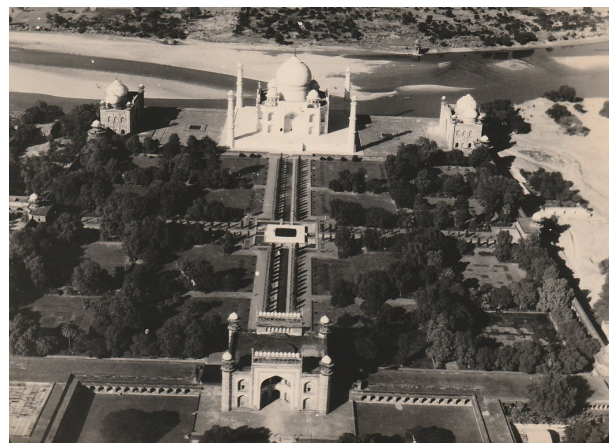


Written on back:  
*Self and Buick*

Nothing written on the back BUT it's the same car



Written on back: *Solitude and thoughts of home*  
*N. Punjab can be beautiful*



Written on back: *The Taj Mahal India*



Well-known and much respected, Mrs. Besty Markham (52), wife of Mr. James Markham, of 57, North Parade, passed away on Wednesday last. Deceased was a member of the Ashby Women's Guild. The Rev. G. H. Dunford conducted the funeral service at Brumby cemetery on Friday, when the following mourners were present:—Mr. J. Markham (husband), Mr. and Mrs. H. Markham (son and daughter-in-law), Mr. and Mrs. R. Markham (son and daughter-in-law), Sylvia, Edna and Evelyn Markham (daughters), Mr. and Mrs. Kirkby (brother-in-law and sister), Mr. J. H. Clark (brother), Mr. and Mrs. J. Wilson (brother-in-law and sister), Mr. and Mrs. H. Hitchen (brother-in-law and sister), Mr. and Mrs. L. Graves (brother-in-law and sister), Mrs. Stafford, Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Beeson, Mrs. Goodhand, Mrs. Brumby, Mrs. Chafer and Mr. Brumby (friends). Wreaths were received from: Dad, Evelyn, Sylvia and Bert; Herb, Kath and family; Ray and Nell; Wilf (Ambala, India); Edna and Clarrie; mother; Sally, Tom and family; Mary and Jim; Henry and Ethel; Edith, Harry and family; Flo, Len and family; Mrs. Brumby and family; Mrs. Burrell and family; Mr. and Mrs. E. Foster; Dinah and Harry; Jim, Edie and baby; Mrs. Hunter and family; Mrs. Scott and family; No. 2 Branch, Women's Guild; Mrs. Goodhand; neighbours and friends (wreath and stone); Jack and Norah; Lizzie, Walt and family. Scunthorpe Co-operative Society had charge of the funeral arrangements.

Betsy MARKHAM neé CLARK  
 Died: 1 Dec 1937 (aged 52), Ashby, Lincolnshire

Wreaths were received from:  
 Dad (James Markham)  
 Evelyn (daughter)  
 Sylvia (daughter) and Bert  
 Herb (son) and Kath  
 Ray (son) and Nell  
 Wilf (Ambala India)  
 Edna (daughter) and Clarrie  
 Mother (Sarah Maria COWLING (1863-1942))

And further down: Mrs Burrell and family (future mother-in-law and of course future wife)



Written on the back:  
*George and I at the drome*

This is J.E Pester, a good friend from 203 (FB) Squadron in Iraq and was on all the photographs of the Squadron Dance band there. Here they were to meet again, but who came to RAF Ambala first?

Here together with George



Another photo of J.E.Pester

Written on back:  
*Typical Indian Well Punjab*



## From 28 (AC) Squadron RAF Ambala to SHQ (CWS) Ambala 30th July to 28 November 1938

SHQ is “Station Headquarters” and CWS is “Central Wireless School.

There is nothing in his records to say what he was here for, but it could be for re-schooling or even maybe for instructing as he was a very experienced wireless operator in morse. We shall probably never know.

## From (CWS) Ambala to H.E 28th November 1938

H.E stands for “Home Embarkation” to England. I presume it was by sea.

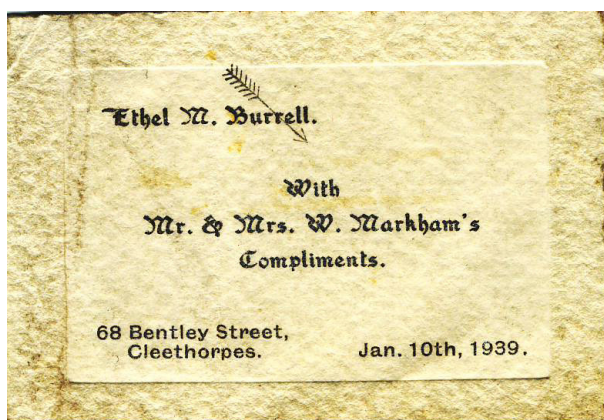
## H.E to RAF Hemswell, UK 20th December 1938

*Hemswell air field (RAF Hemswell) was an airfield 210 kilometers north of London.*

*The airfield was built from 1935, it officially opened in January 1937. It was not the first airfield here however. Late in 1916, a field on the northeast side of the junction of what would eventually be the B1398 and A631 near Harpswell, was requisitioned for the Royal Flying Corps, intended to be used as a night landing ground named Harpswell. In 1918, 199 and 200 Training Squadrons were established at Harpswell. By the end of World War I several buildings, including four hangars, had been erected on its east side. However, the flying units and the airfield lasted not very long and within a year cattle was grazing the field again.*

*In the early 1930s, the site became a candidate for an expansion scheme airfield for the RAF. The lands were compulsorily purchased and construction began in 1935. Four Type C hangars fronted the center field, known as ‘the bombing circle’ and the logisitics and barrack sites were in close proximity behind them. Now officially named Hemswell, the station opened in early 1937 with 61 and 144 Sqns as the resident units. 144 Squadron arrived in February and 61 Squadron a month later. Both were equipped with Avro Anson and Hawker Audax aircraft, but Bristol Blenheims replaced these by January 1938 and those were completely re-placed by Handley Page Hampdens in mid March 1939.*

The marriage between Ethel May Burrell and Wilfred Markham took place at the Registry Office in Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire on the 10th January 1939.



Written on the back: *January 1939*



From his Service Records:

Marriage. Wife's Maiden Name: Ethel May Burrell date 10/1/39 Place RD Cleethorpes, Lincs

Date placed on Waiting list

Date transferred to Marriage Establishment

Home Address 79 Kings Hill Avenue, Northolt, Middlesex

He was obviously back in England, here with his sister Sylvia but the baby could be Barbara born in 1938 or John born 1939.

Sylvia was also in the first photo he had with their parents on page 3!



## From RAF Hemswell to RAF Wattisham 26th April 1939

WORLD WAR II.

Wattisham (Suffolk) opened in March 1939 as a medium bomber station and joined by part of No. 2 Group, Nos. 107 and 110 Squadrons from Harwell and equipped with **Bristol Blenheim Bombers** upon the outbreak of war. On 4th September 1939, only 29 hrs after the declaration of war, bombers from RAF Wattisham took off for their first attack of the war against Germany by attacking shipping in Wilhelmshaven harbour. **The attrition rates were very heavy during the spring and summer of 1940 and a total of 61 aircraft were lost by Nos. 107 and 110 while flying from Wattisham.**

The Squadron No. 107 left in May 1941 when sent north for coastal Command aid in Leuchars. It was replaced by No. 226 Squadron from Ireland and retrained to fly Blenheims. Then No. 226 left in December for Swanton Morley and this being taken over by a re-formed No. 18 Squadron. The remaining RAF Wattisham squadron, No. 110, was posted to the Far East in March 1942, leaving there Blenheims behind. No. 18 Squadron was disbanded in March only to reappear from Scotland in May but then by August it was despatched for preparation to go to North Africa and send to West Raynham. This marked the end of Bomber Command operation from Wattisham. **This station had the highest losses of Blenheims from any station with 118 Blenheims failed to return or crash.** The station was the in some time October 1942 handed over to the United States Army Air Force.

**The majority of RAF Bomber Command aircrew were aged 19 through to their mid-twenties although younger and considerably older airmen have been identified. The average age is stated to have been 21**



**The Blenheim typically carried a crew of three – pilot, navigator/bombardier and wireless (radio) operator/air gunner.**

# RAF Wattisham

4th Sep 1939 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

4th Sep 1939 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

4th Sep 1939 110 Squadron Blenheim lost

27th Dec 1939 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

10th Jan 1940 110 Squadron Blenheim lost

27th Mar 1940 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

15th Apr 1940 110 Squadron Blenheim lost

11th May 1940 110 Squadron Blenheim lost

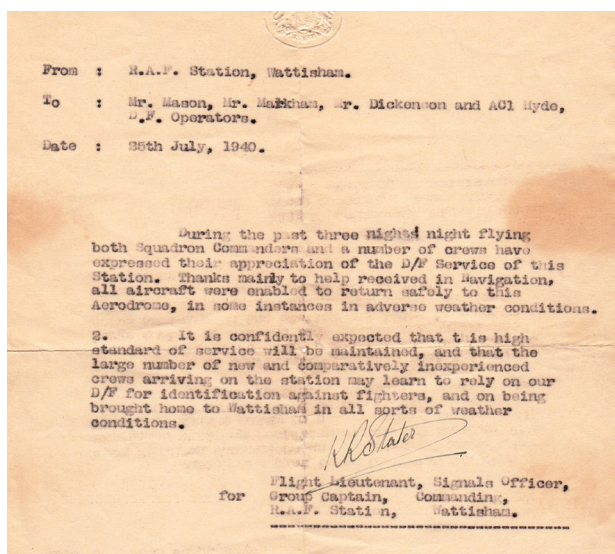
12th May 1940 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

22nd May 1940 110 Squadron Blenheim lost

9th Jun 1940 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

30th Aug 1940 107 Squadron Blenheim lost

3rd Jun 1941 Aircraft Lost



On his discharge papers his address on the 13 June 1939: New Bungalow is crossed out and "Ambala" added. This their first house and named after his RAF station in India, and I am very pleased to say it is still called this!

The house is on Boswell Lane, Hadleigh, Suffolk and is 7.7 miles (12.5 kms) to RAF station Wattisham and he used to cycle to and from, later by motorcycle. More in the section "Addendum"

It is also the house I was born in, 18th Feb 1940, and according to Mum, on the kitchen table!

(RAF Wattisham was Dad's last RAF station and funnily enough my first in 1958, for 2 years)

He (now they!) arrived at Wattisham during the Spring of 1939 and as the dark clouds of a coming war were gathering, he decided, as he was coming to the end of his service, to sign on again for the possible duration of the war.

He was at this time a D/F operator (Direction Finding) on the station. He discussed this with his O/C (Officer Commanding) and they decided that he should continue during the same job, but as a civilian. He was to be transferred to one of the two Blenheim Squadrons, 107 and 110 as one of the 3 man crew as wireless (radio) operator/air gunner.

He was now a very experienced, had over 700 hours flying time, and was at the age of 27 much older than the average age of the flying crews (21) that were being trained at that time.

I have often wondered if the powers that be suspected that the losses of a Blenheim Bomber Squadron would be as bad as it turned out to be, and this was maybe the reason.

Although the following letter he received was a year later, the situation would have been the same.

Notice the wording "comparatively inexperienced crews".

From: R.A.F. Station, Wattisham  
To: Mr. Mason, Mr. Markham, Mr. Dickinson and AC1 Hyde,  
D.F. Operators  
Date: 25th July, 1940

During the past three nights night flying both Squadron Commanders and a number of crews have expressed their appreciation of the D/F Service of this Station. Thanks mainly to help received in navigation, all aircraft were able to return safely to this Aerodrome, in some instances in adverse weather conditions.

2. It is confidently expected that this high standard of service will be maintained, and that the large number of new and comparatively inexperienced crews arriving on this station may learn to rely on our D/F for identification against fighters, and on being brought home to Wattisham in all sorts of weather conditions.

For: Flight Lieutenant, Signals Officer, Group Captain,  
Commanding, R.A.F. Station, Wattisham



# RAF Wattisham and Discharge

## 13th June 1939

Form 856.

### ROYAL AIR FORCE.

#### STATEMENT ON DISCHARGE OF AN AIRMAN'S QUALIFICATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT.

Trade..... WIRELESS OPERATOR.

Aircraftman

No. 515223. Rank 1st Class. Name MARKHAM, Wilfred.

has been employed as, and is conversant with the duties of (trade) Wireless  
Operator in the Royal Air Force. He underwent training in this trade  
at Electrical & Wireless School, CRANWELL from 6th June, 1932  
to 20th July, 1933 passing out with 62% marks on final examination.  
Since (date) 21st July, 1933 he has been employed on the undermentioned duties,  
and has performed these duties with the degree of ability as shown:—

(a) Wireless Operator.	Superior.
(b) .....	.....
(c) .....	.....

He also completed the following courses and obtained the results shown—

Educational examination for	
(a) reclassification to Leading Aircraftman - PASS.	
(b) .....	-
(c) .....	-

Additional information as to the airman's capabilities and employment:—

A very efficient and reliable Wireless Operator  
of superior ability who has performed his duties in a most  
satisfactory manner.

He is an experienced air and ground operator,  
including D/F and has completed 700 hours in the air as a W/T  
operator.

His character has been "Very Good" and he has at  
all times conducted himself in an exemplary manner.

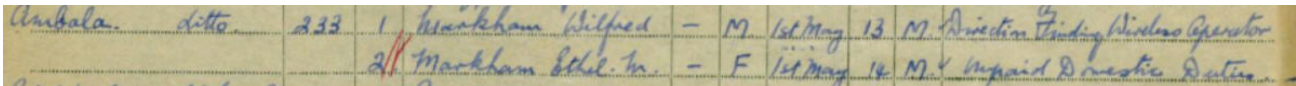
Date 11 July, 1939.

*McWidman*  
Flight Lieutenant (R.A.F.O.),  
for Group Captain,  
Officer i/c Records,  
ROYAL AIR FORCE.

N.B.—This certificate is not granted to any airman who is discharged with a character which  
has been assessed as lower than "GOOD," and is in amplification of the Certificate  
of Service and Discharge (Form 280).

# ADDENDUM

## The war years Sept.1939 to May 1945



The 1939 Register. 41 Million Names Recorded On The Eve Of War was conducted on 29 Sept 1939. Dad is named “Direction Finding Wireless Operator” (the notes after this states that the Air Ministry was contacted) and Mum “Unpaid Domestic Duties”.

R.A.F. Form 510.

NO. 515235. RANK A.C.1. NAME & INITIALS. MARKHAM, W.

Brief statement of trade qualifications, character, and general conduct.

An excellent W/T operator, above average. A very efficient and reliable man with plenty of experience both as an air and ground operator including D/F; he has in fact, done 700 hours in the air as a W/T operator.

His general conduct and character are very good and he can be relied upon at all times.

Date 1st June, 1939.

(Signed) *O. J. Ford* W/Cdr O.C.

R.A.F. Station, WATTISHAM

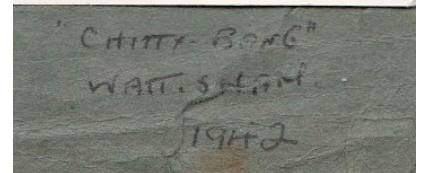
D 58560-1-8099-24 4723-208 P.R.F.

From the Officer Commanding R.A.F Station Wattisham  
1st June 1939



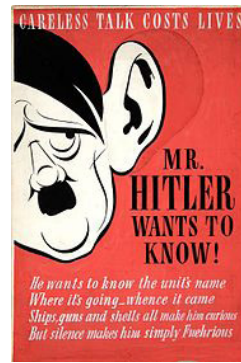
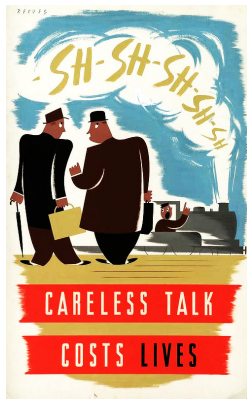
“Chitty Bang” Wattisham  
1942

*The origin of the name “Chitty Bang Bang” is disputed, but is believed to have come from a salacious World War I song.*  
*Wikipedia*



1940  
Above: my grandmother and (right) Mum with me, outside “Ambala”, Boswell Lane, Hadleigh, Suffolk





There are two stories that he told us of the particular period, both involve the time called “the Phoney war”.

*The Phoney War was an eight-month period at the start of World War II, during which there were no major military land operations on the Western Front. 3 Sep 1939 – 10 May 1940*

Britain was in a state of high alert, to put it mildly, and there was a constant vigil regarding possible German spies and those trying to help them undercover.

The first was that he was called out by the local police in Hadleigh, my mother wasn't even told, that he would have to help the police, at 2 in the morning, where they would pick him up to assist them in reading a Morse message that was sent at the same time every night. At the correct time the message appeared, light flashing in the distance. He then told them that it was not a message at all, in fact what they found out later was that it was somebody on his motorcycle coming home from shift work and it was his headlight flashing through the trees coming towards them from some distance. Problem solved!

The second was that he was on his bicycle very early on a Sunday morning on the way to Wattisham when he saw large fresh white painted letters on the road as a message to aircraft, he then cycled to the nearest police station and on returning with them that all had been washed away, and the water was still wet.

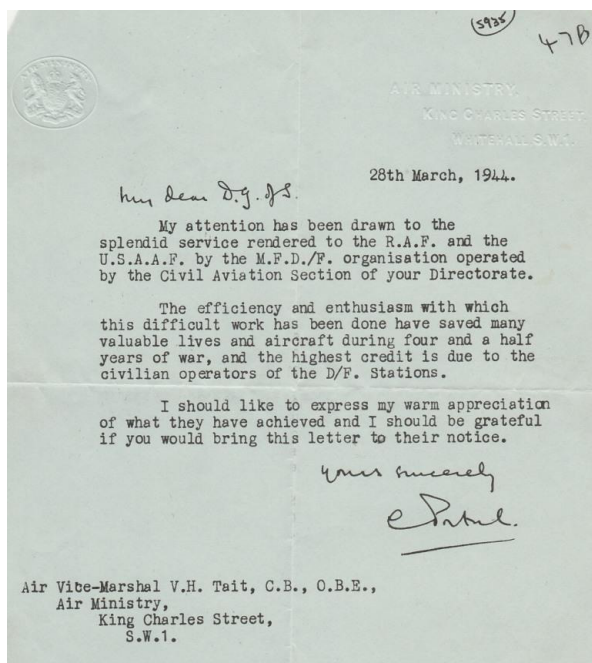
We also had Evacuees from London during this period.



Dad was posted to RAF Tangmere on the South Coast in I think 1942, which according to the RAF Wattisham historical records is the year that in “October 1942 handed over to the United States Army Air Force”

Of course they were during the D-Day invasion of 6 June 1944 and he took me outside to see all the aircraft overhead, he said the sky was black with them. I was only 4 at that time and can only remember a few episodes from the.

He was to remain at Tangmere until 1948.



Medium frequency-direction finding system.

*“The efficiency and enthusiasm with which this difficult work has been done have saved many valuable lives and aircraft during four and a half years of war, and the highest credit is due to civilian operators of the D/F Stations”*

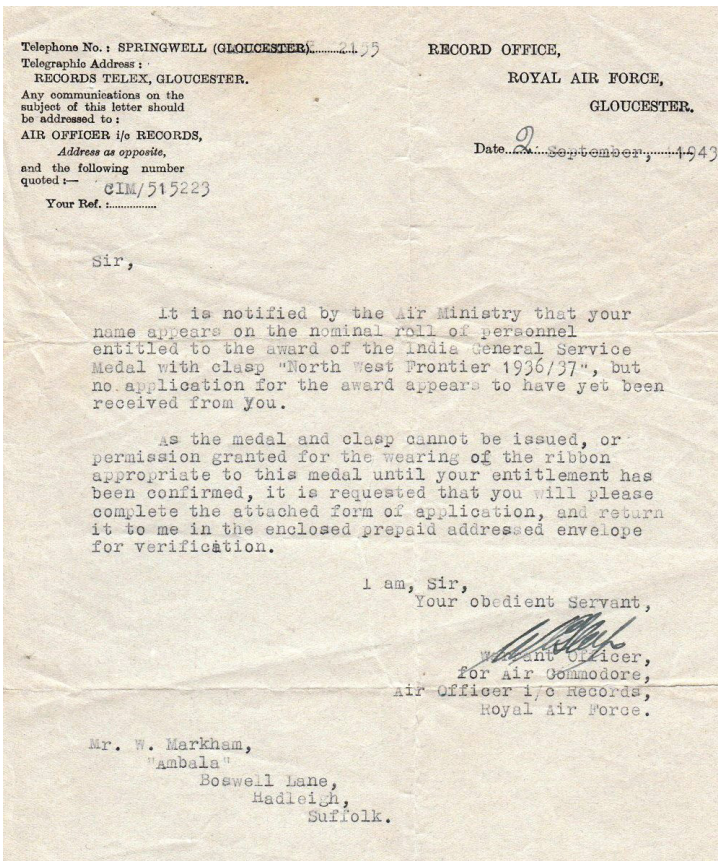


1944 M.F.D/F Organisation RAF Tangmere

1944

# ADDENDUM

## The North West Frontier medal



Letter sent to him at "Ambala" Boswell Lane, Hadleigh on the 2nd September 1943 and all he had to do was to *complete the attached form of application, and return in the enclosed prepaid addressed envelope for verification.*

But he had moved from that address, and it was wartime so the letter was never forwarded to him.

But then 40 years later, and it was despatched within days!



**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**  
 RAF Personnel Management Centre  
 Innsworth Gloucester GL3 1EZ  
 Telephone 0452

Mr W Markham

Your reference

Caistor  
 Lincoln  
 LN7 6PA

Our reference  
 DPM(Airmen)/  
 Date Medals  
 31 May 83

Dear Mr Markham

Thank you for your letter dated 8 Apr 83 regarding your India General Service Medal (1936) with clasp North West Frontier 1937/39.

Your records show that this medal was despatched to you in 1943 but was returned to safe custody as you had moved from that address. I confirm the award of the medal which is now enclosed for your retention. Please sign the form of receipt and return it to this office as an acknowledgement that it has been delivered safely.

Yours sincerely

for Director Personnel  
 Management(Airmen)  
 (Royal Air Force)

Enclosures:

1. Medal as above
2. Form of Receipt



# ADDENDUM

## Pakistan and India 1947

### Was partition of India & Pakistan really required?



India and Pakistan won independence in August 1947, following a nationalist struggle lasting nearly three decades. It set a vital precedent for the negotiated winding up of European empires elsewhere. Unfortunately, it was accompanied by the largest mass migration in human history of some 10 million. As many as one million civilians died in the accompanying riots and local-level fighting, particularly in the western region of Punjab which was cut in two by the border.

The agreement to divide colonial India into two separate states - one with a Muslim majority (Pakistan) and the other with a Hindu majority (India) is commonly seen as the outcome of conflict between the nations' elites. This explanation, however, renders the mass violence that accompanied partition difficult to explain.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/partition1947\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/partition1947_01.shtml)

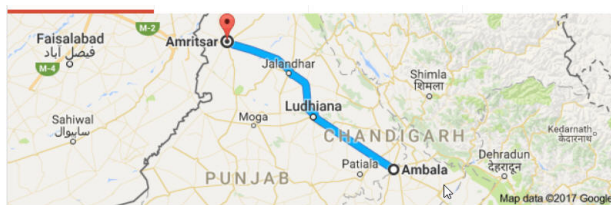
From Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Pakistan\\_relations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Pakistan_relations)

*Relations between India and Pakistan have been complex and largely hostile due to a number of historical and political events. Relations between the two states have been defined by the violent partition of British India in 1947, the Kashmir conflict and the numerous military conflicts fought between the two nations. Consequently, their relationship has been plagued by hostility and suspicion. Northern India and Pakistan somewhat overlap in areas of certain demographics, shared lingua francas (mainly Punjabi and Hindustani) and shared cuisines inherited from the Mughal Empire.*

*After the dissolution of the British Raj in 1947, two new sovereign nations were formed—the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. The subsequent partition of the former British India displaced up to 12.5 million people, with estimates of loss of life varying from several hundred thousand to 1 million. India emerged as a secular nation with a Hindu majority population and a large Muslim minority, while Pakistan emerged also as a secular nation with an overwhelming Muslim majority population; later becoming an Islamic republic although its constitution guarantees freedom of religion to people of all faiths.*

*Soon after their independence, India and Pakistan established diplomatic relations but the violent partition and numerous territorial claims would overshadow their relationship. Since their Independence, the two countries have fought three major wars, one undeclared war and have been involved in numerous armed skirmishes and military standoffs. The Kashmir conflict is the main centre-point of all of these conflicts with the exception of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 and Bangladesh Liberation War, which resulted in the secession of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).*

The Amritsar massacre, that took place on 13 April, 1919



The reason I have included this, is that I took Dad to see the film 'Gandhi' a 1982 British-Indian epic produced and directed by Richard Attenborough shortly after the film's premiere.

He was very moved by the Amritsar massacre in the film and I asked him if he had ever heard of this when he was for 2 years at Ambala, (albeit 18 years later) and he no knowledge of this at all. He had never heard of it.

Amritsar was close to Ambala (250 kms).

Here is the scene from the film (on youtube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=345aojByoGk>

*In Amritsar, India's holy city of the Sikh religion, British and Gurkha troops massacre at least 379 unarmed demonstrators meeting at the Jallianwala Bagh, a city park. Most of those killed were Indian nationalists meeting to protest the British government's forced conscription of Indian soldiers and the heavy war tax imposed against the Indian people.*

*A few days earlier, in reaction to a recent escalation in protests, Amritsar was placed under martial law and handed over to British Brigadier General Reginald Dyer, who banned all meetings and gatherings in the city. On April 13, the day of the Sikh Baisakhi festival, tens of thousands of people came to Amritsar from surrounding villages to attend the city's traditional fairs. Thousands of these people, many unaware of Dyer's recent ban on public assemblies, convened at Jallianwala Bagh, where a nationalist demonstration was being held. Dyer's troops surrounded the park and without warning opened fire on the crowd, killing several hundred and wounding more than a thousand. Dyer, who in a subsequent investigation admitted to ordering the attack for its "moral effect" on the people of the region, had his troops continue the murderous barrage until all their artillery was exhausted. British authorities later removed him from his post.*

Some historians consider the episode a decisive step towards the end of British rule in India

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jallianwala\\_Bagh\\_massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jallianwala_Bagh_massacre)

# ADDENDUM

## Morse

Morse code is a method of transmitting text information as a series of on-off tones, lights, or clicks that can be directly understood by a skilled listener or observer without special equipment. It is named for Samuel F. B. Morse, an inventor of the telegraph. The International Morse Code encodes the ISO basic Latin alphabet, some extra Latin letters, the Arabic numerals and a small set of punctuation and procedural signals (prosigns) as standardized sequences of short and long signals called “dots” and “dashes”, or “dits” and “dabs”, as in amateur radio practice. Because many non-English natural languages use more than the 26 Roman letters, extensions to the Morse alphabet exist for those languages.

Each Morse code symbol represents either a text character (letter or numeral) or a prosign and is represented by a unique sequence of dots and dashes. The dot duration is the basic unit of time measurement in code transmission. The duration of a dash is three times the duration of a dot. Each dot or dash is followed by a short silence, equal to the dot duration. The letters of a word are separated by a space equal to three dots (one dash), and the words are separated by a space equal to seven dots. To increase the speed of the communication, the code was designed so that the length of each character in Morse is approximately inverse to its frequency of occurrence in English. Thus the most common letter in English, the letter “E”, has the shortest code, a single dot.

Morse code is used by some amateur radio operators, although knowledge of and proficiency with it is no longer required for licensing in most countries. Pilots and air traffic controllers usually need only a cursory understanding. Aeronautical navigational aids, such as VORs and NDBs, constantly identify in Morse code. Compared to voice, Morse code is less sensitive to poor signal conditions, yet still comprehensible to humans without a decoding device. Morse is, therefore, a useful alternative to synthesized speech for sending automated data to skilled listeners on voice channels. Many amateur radio repeaters, for example, identify with Morse, even though they are used for voice communications.

SOS, the standard emergency signal, is a Morse code prosign 

In an emergency, Morse code can be sent by improvised methods that can be easily “keyed” on and off, making it one of the simplest and most versatile methods of telecommunication. The most common distress signal is SOS -- three dots, three dashes, and three dots -- internationally recognized by treaty.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6ggckXtZjs>

This following is from a friend of mine, he served also in Aden (3 years later than me) at RAF Steamer Point and worked as a telegraphist at HQ MidEast Command. He was taught Morse as part of his training and his help has been invaluable in getting me to understand Morse.

“I mentioned in Roskilde that they often used messages sent in Africaans when we were learning Morse code. This was to teach us not to try and actually read what we were writing down and Africaans has combinations of letters not found in English. We had to reach a minimum of 21 words per minute to pass the course, which everyone did. Some managed to do 25. The emphasis was on reading Morse, rather than sending it. Morse code sent by an individual is as distinctive as handwriting. Just as we do not find many people with beautiful handwriting, those with a beautiful touch on the Morse key were a very rare breed. It could not really be learned. You had it, or you didn’t. I only remember one guy who was brilliant at Morse. He actually sent Morse by inserting part of a broken hacksaw blade into the Morse key, then twanging it to produce the dots and dashes. The result was pure music, apparently. He was at the Tactical Signals Unit based in Steamer Point, and was sent to Zambia, together with a squadron of Javelins, following Ian Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence. It was this guy’s job to maintain radio contact via Morse with RN ships patrolling the Mozambique Straits (looking for oil tankers trying to dodge the blockage).

In Aden, I think we had WT links to a couple of air strips upcountry. I am not sure if the guy on the other end was RAF or Army. After Borneo, Aden and Madagascar, I suspect that Morse would have been used by the Army, especially the SAS, in the Oman and also, possibly, for a while in Belize.

“In the early 80s I entered aircrew training with the Royal Air Force. This was immediately after the Falklands war and there was a huge resurgent interest in Morse Code. This is because with all the Electronic Countermeasures, the only communication that worked effectively during the conflict were the dahs and dits (not dots and dashes – saying that shows you’ve never sent/received morse code) as human operators listened in and could detect tiny differences of tone in amongst all the radio-frequency jamming. They could just about make out a dah from a dit and they could therefore receive messages despite the hostile RF environment.”

I found an interesting video of an American POW in North Vietnam. During a forced interview he sends the Morse message “I am being tortured” by blinking his eyes.

<https://imgur.com/xfVcOm5>

This may not be very helpful, but at least it is background info. What strikes me is that I was taught Morse Code and Teleprinting, while previous generations of communications people were taught Morse, Semaphore and Aldis lamp. Technologies have a way of becoming redundant”

Thank you Peter!

### International Morse Code

1. The length of a dot is one unit.
2. A dash is three units.
3. The space between parts of the same letter is one unit.
4. The space between letters is three units.
5. The space between words is seven units.

A	• —	U	• • —
B	• • • —	V	• • — •
C	• — • —	W	• — • —
D	• — • •	X	• — • — •
E	•	Y	• — • — • —
F	• • — •	Z	• — • — • —
G	• — • — •		
H	• • • •		
I	• •		
J	• — • — • —		
K	• — • — • —	1	• — • — • —
L	• — • — • —	2	• — • — • —
M	• — • — • —	3	• — • — • —
N	• — • — • —	4	• — • — • —
O	• — • — • —	5	• — • — • —
P	• — • — • —	6	• — • — • —
Q	• — • — • —	7	• — • — • —
R	• — • — • —	8	• — • — • —
S	• — • — • —	9	• — • — • —
T	• — • — • —	0	• — • — • —



# ADDENDUM

“Ambala” through the years



1940



2003



2017  
Thank you Les!



To the memory of our parents,  
Dad (1913-1988) and Mum (1914-1990)

Tim, Phil and Jenny

For our children:  
Peter, Caroline, Paul, David, Alexander, Susannah  
and our grandchildren:  
Sam, Charlie, Edward, Alice, Sofie, Maggie  
(to be continued)

Not forgetting our family tree:

<http://www.markham.dk/philip/>