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The UCL Institute of Archaeology Air Survey Photographs: an archaeological reference collection of Royal Air Force aerial imagery from 1918–39

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The UCL Institute of Archaeology Collections contain a series of Air Survey photographs that include a group of glass plate negatives, cellulose negatives, safety negatives and prints of Royal Air Force (RAF) aerial photographs taken between 1918 and 1939 (Figures 1–6). The Institute's collection is one of the larger archives of images taken by the RAF in the Middle East still in their original boxes with their annotated notes. The images are mainly of Iraq, the former Transjordan, Egypt and Sudan, when these areas were part of the British Mandate. In 2017 the negatives were digitised and conserved in collaboration with the EAMENA project. The images now form an amazing resource for the discovery, monitoring and analysis of the archaeological sites. They are available online via the APAMME website: <http://www.apaame.org/>.



Figure 1 AP175: An aerial view of Tepe Gawra in 1927. The land around the site is now cultivated



Figure 2 AP716: This image is taken directly from above the site of UR, possibly in 1926, and would have been combined with similar images to produce a composite image



Figure 3 AP1308: The citadel of Cairo in 1928 which shows just how much the city has changed since



Figure 4 AP1462: In the foreground can be seen the bridge at Mosul, while in the background is the city itself in 1934



Figure 5 AP1347: Here is one of the planes used by the RAF to take the images. The precise date and place are unknown other than the images having been taken between 1920 and 1938



Figure 6 AP1463: Taken in 1934, this is an oblique view of the Gate of Bulls at Khorsabad (Dur-Sharrukin), with what seems to show the excavations undertaken by the Oriental Institute of Chicago