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Tape 853 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:

Brigadier Richard Gardiner and Mrs. Catherine Gardiner

4700.0578 853.1 (Tape 6 of 7)

Sir Alec Ogilvie

4700.0584 853.2 (Tape 1 of 2)

Colonel and Mrs. C.A.K. Innes-Wilson

4700.0585 853.3 (Tape 1 of 4)

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:

Gardiners: 3/8/1978

Ogilvie: 3/14/1978

Innes-Wilsons: 3/29/78

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 34 minutes

Gardiners: 17 minutes

Ogilvie: 73 minutes

Innes-Wilsons: 4 minutes:

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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Tape 853, Side A

Gardiners (Part 8 of 10) (853.1)

001 Inquiry and rumors about submarine in the harbor that had fired a torpedo

008 earthquakes

014 investigating railway accidents, most are straightforward

- 017 the mystery of one particular accident at Dimapur (continued from tape 852), he was in charge of re-enacting accident to resolve conflicting claims regarding the deformation of the track
- 027 rebuild site for re-enactment, collected a train with the same number of coaches and weighted them with sandbags
- 040 arranged it so that the vacuum brake was working, placed an internal combustion engine to activate the brake system
- 049 arranged telescope on the front of the train; building a large buffer across the track
- 052 arranged derailment by opening a joint
- 055 used an eight-speed engine to push the train to gain speed (45 mph)
- 065 then watched the crash in broad daylight, the first time anyone was ever prepared to watch a railway accident
- 072 re-enactment indicated that the engine was at fault, eventually they had to redesign it
- 080 moving picture cameras, he filmed the incident but sold his camera after it began to deteriorate
- 088 a bogey is a four-wheeled, two-axle track upon which cars and locomotives sit
- 092 railway men got a lot of travel time, as did the ICS men
- 108 he was born in India and it was expected that he would serve overseas, probably India
- 119 Calcutta was distinct “a little nation of its own”, crowded
- 129 Bombay, you found people, entire families, sleeping on the pavements
- 140 people often climbed on the roof of trains because of crowds
- 145 Richard was involved in theatrical plays, miniature theaters
- 162 he also dove and swam a lot in Rangoon
- 166 end of Gardiner interview

Tape 853, Side A cont'd

Ogilvie (Part 1 of 3) (853.2)

- 166 Interview is in London
- 168 tradition of family service
- 172 Alec was born in England in 1913, but taken to India when he was three months old
- 175 vague childhood memories of living in Delhi and Shimla
- 178 earliest recollection of living in tents while New Delhi was being constructed
- 182 his father was in the Foreigner Political Department through the Army
- 189 thus his service was in the loveliest part of India (not British India), the Indian States
- 193 Frank's interest in India
- 197 Alec returned to India after his education and worked in London; he joined a British company in Calcutta when he was 21 (March, 1935), his father was still there and did not retire until October 1937
- 205 Alec enjoyed visiting his father who was Agent to the Governor General in now Rajasthan, covering all of the most beautiful states
- 210 Bikaner, a city; the Maharaja used to give Christmas Shoot [?]
- 216 a 24 hour train ride from Calcutta to Delhi, changing trains and going to Bathinda, changed trains again at the Bikaner State Railway
- 224 Christmas party, father Christmas
- 239 after Christmas, house party moved out [Gajner?] for three days shooting, where there was

a lake

251 his father returned to England at the age of 55, but had spent 44 years in India

262 people say that every year spent in Calcutta after the age of 55 took five years off your life

272 Alec's vague childhood recollections, children saw their parents very little; between the ages of 12-18, he saw his father a total of six weeks one summer vacation

280 children were sent back to England rather than educated in India; this was very difficult

300 two reasons people sent their children back: 1) the lack of adequate schools after age eight and 2) climate

312 after WWII, with the introduction of regular air travel, the gap was closed a bit

315 Alec lived in Calcutta for 30 years (March 1935- March 1965), but was away while in the Indian Army during WWII (August 1940 - February 1946)

326 life in Calcutta between 1935 and 1940: very similar to contemporary Hong Kong (last remaining outposts of Old British Empire), you worked hard and played hard

335 Calcutta had simmering political trouble

346 he preferred the eighteen years of Independent India

351 his father encouraged him to go into business because he realized that British involvement in government was going to decrease with next generations

369 living conditions in Calcutta: had 17 servants

394 story about the day he arrived in Calcutta: a man greeted him at the railway station who lined up personal servants from which to choose, the one he chose stayed with them until he and his wife left in 1965 (a tearful departure)

407 Alec was a Japanese prisoner of war, and his personal servant tracked him down after his release

416 it was very rare that a personal servant lasted through the transition from his master's single life to his married one

427 Calcutta was not as popular to work in as was Bombay, outbursts usually led to violence

433 the least popular government job in India in the 1930's was Safety Governor

438 danger was just a part of life

438 Calcutta was the capital of India until Delhi became the capital

447 Bombay was financial sector, a businessman's city

463 when people ask him if he was upset leaving India, he replies that he was sad at going, but not sorry to leave

466 famines and wars

473 when Pakistan was divided into two, the refugees from the new Pakistan went to Calcutta but the city was not prepared for the influx of people

496 the British always retired in their own country

506 on 15 August, 1947--Independence Day--he went out into the streets of Calcutta and people were shouting "Long live India!"; no feeling against the British unlike the Dutch who had a "very rough departure"

566 doesn't remember any rude Indians

578 Indians wrote in English

586 the language question: English, Hindi, Tamil

Tape 853, Side B**Ogilvie (Part 3 of 3) (853.2)**

000 training grounds in the Northwest frontier
 006 [Rusnuk?] ascended 8000 feet
 008 RP duty (road protection); going up into the hills with convoys
 019 they went from the frontier to train for the Middle East; they went for days without drinking in order to train
 020 transferred to Burma
 023 they arrived in Malta two months before the Japanese arrived and were held prisoner for three and a half years in Singapore
 026 changes since Independence, gradual
 036 inflation
 038 Americans (GIs) did not “behave too terribly well” during the Indian War in Calcutta, so that when the British returned, they were more loved by Indians
 041 British did not like the money that Americans had
 046 story about Americans over paying servants, affecting the market
 056 American soldiers in captivity; the USS *Houston* was sunk nearby
 057 he picked up languages such as Hindi
 060 the inexperience of some British officers regarding the many Indian languages and dialects; languages were confusing; serious problems arose when they couldn’t understand the language of the Indian Army
 066 it was easier for him because he had been in India
 069 the gap during the war between the Indian Army officers (with previous experience) and those who just came out from England; stories he would hear about the old Indian Army regulars
 074 in his regiment (unlike others you would hear about), there was no stratification between ECO (emergency commissioned officers) and the Regular army men
 077 his sister, Vera, was married to a Birdwood whose father had been Commander in Chief in India
 084 before the war, people from businesses and different services did not mix company; they were separate communities
 085 as a young man, he remembers that as a head of a large company one would know the senior ICS people in the government as well as one would know the officers in the fort
 090 memories of singing in a cabaret at the Saturday Club in a production about the Army
 094 British India had their own vocabulary; there a lot of Indian words that describe situations better than the English language, but they never use them in front of relations, etc.
 105 story about getting currencies confused when discussing a man’s raise (1000 rupees vs. 1000 pounds)
 122 “*prabandhabus*” means “arrangement”
 137 there were two things he was told to buy in India at Simon Arzt Emporium; a topi and an edition of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*
 145 the end of the topees came with the war; he returned from captivity to find the air force mechanics servicing the planes without any head protections
 148 he remembers that as a child, if he went out without a topi the nurse would probably get fired

150 railway officials still wear topees as part of the uniform
 160 Simon Arzt Emporium was probably run by Egyptians
 161 most British reaction to India was positive
 168 British Tea Garden managers[?]; the nearest neighbor was 20 miles away
 178 unionization after the war; isolation
 189 Calcutta was a close-knit society
 198 tea gardens were clubs that you would drive you to see you friends, sometimes 25 miles
 200 Calcutta was large
 205 the changing of the phrase “Eurasian community” to “Anglo-Indians” in about the 1940s
 221 seeing people he knew in India in England, friendships based on shared experiences
 228 he belongs to the Oriental Club, which originally stemmed from people who worked in
 the East, but now half of the members are associated with the medical fraternity
 243 in the next 10-12 years, he expects that members who actually lived in the East will die
 out; he’s 65 years old and most people he’s talking about are older
 246 he realized he was “becoming archaic” when his son’s university class referred to WWII
 as “Mod Hist”
 253 his contact with Eurasians was limited
 256 he was most likely to have social relations with Indians than Anglo-Indians/Eurasians
 262 they brought back carpets and rugs from India
 269 as a young child, he went along on hunts but did not hunt as an adult
 282 a paper chase is like a treasure hunt with horses and paper; they did it in Calcutta on
 horses
 292 he met his wife in England when he was 16 on a chaperoned Swiss party; she was 11;
 they married in November 1945 and she joined him in India in 1946; she lived there 20
 years and looks on her experience more sentimentally than he does
 325 he was in India 36 years and came back to England at age 51
 339 returning to Calcutta; his wife had not gotten it out of her system
 356 his opinion on “The Plain Tales of the Raj” radio program; his friend, Evan Charlton,
 narrated it; it came on too late for him to listen to the whole thing (his sister’s voice was
 in it)
 381 Michael Mason of the BBC is a good contact regarding the interviews for the radio
 program; the concept of the interviews is similar to de Caro’s; preservation and recording a
 period of history
 390 he particularly liked the background noises of the radio show, the Indian train stations
 395 de Caro was there in 1966-67, just after Alec left
 398 living in Calcutta was a unique experience, but not too popular; they had a large English
 population, much bigger than Bombay
 430 looking out the London window at the playboy bunny girls who walk down the stairs to
 the Playboy Club--“a great American export”
 444 reels of videos made in India
 467 small talk about upcoming vacation plans
 490 story about American tourists in India in June when it was 108 degrees--they told him
 that it was no worse than Texas
 497 end of interview with Sir Alec Ogilvie

Tape 853, Side B cont'd**Innes-Wilsons (Part 1 of 5) (853.3)**

- 498 interview with Colonel C.A.K. Innes-Wilson in Sherborne, England
- 515 he spent most of his time in the north, but was also in the Central Provinces for several years
- 520 he went to India because his family had traditionally served there; his father and grandfather were there
- 532 getting away from the restrictive feeling of serving in the Army in England
- 535 in the Survey of India, they had to work very hard
- 544 he joined the Survey of India in the spring of 1929;
- 550 for the first few years, they spent time out in the field surveying themselves, then later they supervised others
- 556 aerial survey came later; they had an aerial survey organization on the frontier since the 1920s