

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

Tape 855 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES: Colonel and Mrs. C.A.K. Innes-Wilson

COLLECTION: 4700.0585 Tape 855 (Tape 3 of 4)

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATE: 3/29/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 33 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

RESTRICTIONS: Copyright retained by interviewee and/or the interviewee's heirs

NOTE: Copyright and property rights are assigned jointly to Centre of South Asian Studies at the University of Cambridge and Louisiana State University and A & M College Libraries and its successor agencies.

INDEX

Tape 855, Side A

Innes-Wilsons (Part 3 of 5)

- 000 air conditioning and train travel
- 004 if it was hot weather, you traveled with a bucket of ice in the middle of the compartment
- 007 beer helped with the heat
- 008 their terrier would paddle around in it
- 009 when traveling with children, they would bring their Beatrice stove to cook child's food
- 011 in Pakistan, Alec shared carriages with Pakistanis first class, one in particular was the editor of the Civil [?] Gazette, which was anti-British; they had an interesting chat, it turned out he was chairman of the Indo Press Association and he had just come from a meeting in Delhi and that as a routine they made speeches condemning Britain, but their off-the-record opinions were different
- 028 Pakistani peasants were protected by the British justice system; in Pakistan the Muslim factions replaced the estranged Hindus, so the Pakistanis wanted "their Hindus back, please"

034 Alec went into the Survey of India after three months in India and he became a “pseudo-
soldier” by wearing the army uniform when necessary

041 he was ordered to serve in the Ordinance [?] Survey; everyone senior to him was ordered
to retire from the army who was in the survey

049 the principle task of the Survey of India was mapping India according to standard scale,
which took a long time (mapping it, re-mapping it, triangulation, publishing, and
printing)

055 he eventually went into the publishing side of things, he was in charge of the printing
057 when he finished in India, he was the principle administrator
061 they were very scientific

066 the original mapping occurred in the 1870s, so the re-mapping emphasis of was on the
engineering development and irrigation; they mapped large areas at large scales with
close contouring at 1-2 foot intervals for irrigation maps

070 in the 1940s, they began to rely more heavily on aerial surveys for mapping, especially in
Pakistan

081 he sent a lot of Pakistanis and Indians to Canada and the U.S. for instrument training
088 Alec spent a lot of his earlier career in camps doing fieldwork (October-April); their
summer headquarters was at a Hill Station where they did calculations of their fieldwork
and made up for being in the field for six months

105 story about male elephant who took one of his luggage-carrying female elephants away;
she returned but he came into the camp chasing after her and threatening to destroy the
camp, so Alec shot the male; it turned out to be one of the largest elephants ever killed on
record

125 discussion of people who hunted for sport and covered their houses in tiger skins, elephant
tusks, hippo heads, spotted deer skins, and antlers; they weren’t keen on hunting and
gathering trophies

149 hunting was a matter of machismo, but they thought it was macabre

151 they lived in the jungle on survey and became sympathetic with the animals; the people
who enjoyed shooting were the ones who sat in their offices in Calcutta

157 Bengal Army men would go up into the Himalayas and come back with the heads of
mountain goats and sheep

179 the different Indian regiments were composed of different folks, depending on which
communities they were drawn from, i.e. the Bengal Army men were more country
whereas the Bombay men had another type of character

200 to the outsider, the different British regiments looked similar

204 the Gorkhas officers had different attitudes (devotion) towards their troops

216 some regiments were more prestigious than others, i.e. the Indian Calvary

242 scouts on the Northwestern Frontier who were taken from the Indian regiments and placed
into regular forces on the frontier; scouts were very efficient

250 Alec enjoyed camp life; he was the only Englishman; it was exhausting work
257 when he first went out, he was instructed on plain tabling, which is what the Indians did
265 the second time he went out, he was doing triangulation; he had malaria most of the time
and thought he was dying, so sat down to make his will

272 they were called Class One Officers, who were either British or senior Indians promoted up
from the Class Two Series (the backbone of the Survey of India) which was made up of
Indian graduates and experts; he always thought Class Two was demeaning

300 people's initial training through the universities in engineering, mathematics, or regular
 degrees like botany; then they were trained in their respective departments upon arrival
 315 he sailed from England in December 1928 and arrived in India in January 1929
 320 he didn't go on leave until 1934; things had changed in England
 334 he meant only to stay in India four or five years, but changed his mind once he was there
 340 had he known there was a war coming, he would have returned to England to serve as a
 soldier again
 346 hill stations were very different from camp life; the one they went to was north of Delhi
 352 at the hill stations, there was a very social climate
 366 other hill resorts such as Shillong in the Khasi Hills; there are also pine forests; Shillong
 is not as steep as the Himalayas, so the Brits could have their golf courses
 375 they stayed in Indian hotels when they went to hill stations
 390 night life: tea, dancing, dining
 405 clubs brought British folks together, so that it wasn't like moving to a new place each time
 because they would meet people they knew before
 412 in army socials after 1930, they allowed Indian club members
 415 there was, however, discrimination in the business sectors
 417 story about 1930 resistance to club integration within army regiments, but the commanding
 officer of the cavalry regiment said that if his officers couldn't join the club then his forces
 were not available for hire (hunting, etc.)
 426 in Calcutta, there was discrimination against Indians for club membership
 430 in Bombay, there was a mixed club, the Willingdon Club
 441 politics of membership integration; older men were more tolerant than younger men
 453 clubs in army stations were assets to the community; the whole family was welcome
 whereas the civilian clubs such as the Saturday Club, etc. did not allow children
 468 single women joined clubs; Mrs. Innes-Wilson spent most of the war being called one of
 the "abandoned wives"
 474 before the war, people did not marry until they could afford to, which meant there were
 more single members of both sexes
 476 after the war, the character of the clubs and the community changed
 491 the main headquarters of the Survey of India is in Dehradun; Mussoorie, a hill resort, is
 situated about 20 miles (32 km) north of Dehradun
 493 Mussoorie was the center of Sir George Everest's activities and engineers
 500 Everest was Surveyor General of India in the 1830s and his claim to fame was that he
 observed a meridional arc of [11.5 degrees] from north to south (the Himalayas to Cape
 Comorin, the southernmost point of the Indian subcontinent) and worked out the figure of
 the earth; he was engaged in an argument with French scientists as to what kind of
 spheroid the earth is

Tape 855, Side B

Innes-Wilsons (Part 4 of 5)

000 businessmen claimed they didn't need maps to find their way around
 006 the Duke of Wellington was a map-minded man who came to India and insisted on
 mapping his campaign
 009 the Survey of India was likely the oldest department of the government
 024 the social importance of clubs

037 a lot of army men became masons
041 conversations in clubs tended to be about people, food, clothes
050 tailors were remarkably clever
054 men were always accompanied by their personal servants
056 his best friend in India was his personal servant, Mohammed
060 they still correspond
062 he almost left when Alec and his wife married, but decided to stay
068 Mohammed was loyal and trustworthy
075 story about seeing Mohammed beating a man on the head in a railway station because he
had said something offensive about Alec
087 since Mohammed was Muslim, he was contemptuous of those in Delhi who were killing
Muslims; eventually Alec sent him on an airplane to Pakistan and later joined him there
099 list of servants: cook, cook's assistant, sweeper, gardener, washer, waiter, night
watchman, horse groomer, grass-cutter, bearer, and a nanny
115 bearers and nannies moved when they moved, but other servants stayed in their home
village/town
130 Muslim servants never brought their wives and families with them to work; they went on
annual leave to tend to familial business
132 in Madras, they supported the servants and their families because they were Christian
144 story about Mohammed getting caught cutting wood in the Reserve [?] forest; he sent his
brother as a replacement and had to go underground and wait until Alec went to camp
before he rejoined him
150 there was no dishonor in having the police after you, they assumed that Alec was against
the police like them; "avoiding the police was a national sport!"
154 more about the clubs; sports like squash, swimming, tennis, golf (not so much games like
cricket, and football which were more important in army clubs)
175 going to Calcutta as an administrator; piles of paperwork
194 Calcutta no longer the headquarters, but their offices are used as circles
198 in 1947, when the riots and massacres were occurring, the headquarters had moved to
Delhi
203 servants wore uniforms of sorts; i.e. servants serving dinners wore uniforms, white clean
gowns with a sash and a belt; they bought saris for their servants
215 they considered their servants good people; looking back, one was very inconsiderate of
his servants; they would always find ways to accommodate even in trying situations
229 hotcakes
236 internal economies among and between servants; they borrowed materials and recipes
from each other
248 recipes were never written down, nor were ingredients weighed
253 there are some Mongolian food ways in Calcutta because of intermarriage of different
cultural affiliations
256 a story about arriving at a seemingly derelict bungalow, the cook made them a four-
course meal out of practically nothing
268 Mrs. Innes always carried a Beatrice stove, tins, spoons, etc. so they could be
independent if necessary; a man was incensed when she wanted to cook for herself and
didn't think he was capable;

[remaining twenty minutes of tape indexed from digital audio file]

- 1:12:50 small talk about the weather; story about changing seasons, someone being on safari; Jordan discusses their interest in postcards that might have come from India, many depict servants; Innes supposes he has seen those;
- 1:14:17 there are characters in India; supportive of British, he didn't see that change after the war; he thinks Indians in general were underpaid;
- 1:15:14 his generation had more care for the Indians than the generation before; they did all they could to improve their lives; the lowest grade people were the ones who carried equipment around and did menial tasks; what they were paid, pay rates; they were the nicest people; they would go back to their villages in the summer
- 1:16:36 He hasn't heard about Americans spoiling the market, they may have, but there weren't that many around; many American in Delhi around Independence; word got around in America that British were leaving and good business could be had;
- 1:17:26 One man he was friendly with, Carl Zimmerman, they went to Bombay; he thought he could get business by stirring up resentment for the British, but people weren't resentful; American press came over; one man was a photographer for *Time* and he was adept with his camera; he took photos of Gandhi with Lady Mountbatten;
- 1:19:50 British press was there also; when Gandhi was assassinated, a reporter from the BBC was just about to interview him; he made sure Gandhi was dead, then ran to his van and sent the news around the world; they were worried, they didn't know who had assassinated him, if a Muslim had done it, there would have been mayhem, but it was a high-caste Hindu; they take a tea break;
- 1:21:00 Jordan asks about the cohesiveness of the British community in India; most in the ICS were concentrated in the capitals; there wasn't a community in that sense; departments tended to form their own communities; he was separated from other British by great distances; Calcutta and Bombay communities were different from ICS communities; Delhi and Calcutta were totally different;
- 1:23:21 different services at the same station; normally the ICS was heavily outnumbered; viewed the army with slight contempt; in the political service were many army officers; a junior administrator in the ICS;
- 1:25:00 Church brought people together, Catholic or Protestant, so did membership in the Masons; he isn't a Mason so he can't really comment; he came in contact with other British soldiers quite a lot; they couldn't afford to travel far, the enlisted men had a restricted life; his bearer was a big fan of them and would come back with their rations; some Britons behaved themselves, some didn't;
- 1:27:24 he took soldiers by train to Bombay in 1929; he collected about fifty people whose papers were all in order and were perfect; then he collected a group of Scots whose papers were in disarray, they were mutinous and had a bagpiper with them; he collected another regiment of gunners that were more mutinous; [private?] service members were apart from other service members, some learned the language without trouble; during the war they had British troops with the survey
- 1:30:00 dangers of life in India; when he first got there he was expecting a snake at every corner; he only occasionally came in contact with them; small snakes, kraits, were deadly, there was one in his slipper once; a huge cobra in his office one day; mentions big game, tape cuts off