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Tape 838 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES: Margery Hall and Kate Garrod

COLLECTION: 4700.0576 Tape 838 (Tape 1 of 4)

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATE: 2/1/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 93 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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Tape 838, Side A
Hall and Garrod (Part 1 of 6)

001 introduction, recording made in home in Middlesex, England

005 spent eighteen difficult months in India with her three small children

013 hearing from people returning from India, some said it was absolute hell, some said it was fascinating

018 drinking water in India

020 living without refrigeration

028 the government shouldn’t post families to places like that

034 people not understanding how difficult the conditions were

038 they’d been sent to a “punishment area” of India

045 things too appalling to talk about

049 other posts in India and Kashmir before sent to the bad one

053 story about a dying man who was put in a soaking wet bed

059 helpful Maltese doctor who stayed with the man, no nurses available

066 appalled by everything getting so wet in torrential rains

079 Hall is always asking questions about why things happen

083 wife of dead Englishman wanted husband cremated in Hindu tradition, drawbacks of
cremation, cremation denied
she wanted him burned so his demise would feel final
two terribly incompetent doctors in India
man buried on his 28th birthday, on rainy day
troops involved in funeral, dropped coffin
nurses didn’t appear until funeral, Hall was horrified at their nerve
repeatedly refers to memoir she wrote about her time in India, trying not to hurt people
with her writing
got champagne in bazaar after funeral, Hall trying to decide if she should go home to
England or marry her fiancée and stay with him in India
decided to get married
a man she met who planned to write a book based on his experiences in India
man from New Zealand who died in India
Garrod found India interesting, but never the twain shall meet, lived there for 28 years
she served in voluntary unit in WWI
her brother was wounded in war
Garrod used to walk four miles each morning, but now has health problem
considers India very primitive, more than 260 languages spoken there, hard for British to
make it the way they want, impossible to change the East
ask why the interviewers are interested in India
de Caro spent a year in India, same place as one of the women’s husbands
her husband was secretary to high-up British residents, got in a fight with lady of the house
because one of his chores was supposed to be cutting the cake at tea
one interviewee asks what de Caro was doing in India; he says he was teaching in an Indian
college
she hears the trains have improved
de Caro elaborates on his interest in India
when Margery was in India, standard of living had risen since Kate’s time there
British women trained Indian servants to perfection
Margery lived also lived in Borneo, where the servants were appalling
felt that on the whole, British rule was wonderful for India
Indians won’t touch beef and Muslims won’t touch pork, so trouble finding a suitable
cook
standard of European living was high in larger Indian towns, but Indian standards
appalling
difficulty living on their low pay
high quality British women went to India and trained servants; it takes someone
knowledgeable to train servants
squalor in some places was unendurable
before WWI, all the people who went out from Europe were aristocrats, were used to high
living and high thinking
it was not a picnic going to India
started her married life there in 1921, spent 30 years there, couldn’t have had more
interesting, educating or happier life anywhere
both women agree we should not try to change India
a party Garrod attended as a bride where a man told her she should make Indians get up and
work early, but Brahmins wouldn’t work for her until they finished their religious rituals
Hall[?] spent a few months in Poona, her husband in military, WWII broke out

describes British community she lived in within city

scarcity of supplies such as meat

husband had to motorcycle to work

opinions on Gandhi, caused bloodshed and trouble

Gandhi’s relations with a British admiral’s daughter, interviewee’s husband visited him every day

Gandhi wasn’t fasting, he was forcibly fed

interviewees debate whether it was more of a crime to forcibly feed him, or let him die

whereabouts of jail where Gandhi held, students who came to seek him

husband was civil engineer, his promotions

drinking champagne on birthdays

feels we should help people, but should leave nations to sort out their own muddles

now British are making trouble in Rhodesia, says maybe she’ll be sued for saying this

hazards of speaking on BBC

her contributions to the Salvation Army, admires their work with the dregs of humanity

will give money to medical missionaries, but thinks missionary work is wrong

most people don’t have much in the way of religion

her religion is what you do from the time you get up till the time you go to bed, going to church on Sunday won’t help

she has friends with brown skin, let one family live with her because they were denied housing in some areas

old Christian couple across the street who questioned her housing people with brown skin, interviewee questioned the neighbor’s Christian principles

brown-skinned friend who is coming to visit

brown-skinned child asked her to explain racism, she told the child that some people are sick in the head

children in this Indian family had very nice manners

interaction with missionary named Sir Henry Holland, got cholera in interviewee’s house in India

Tape 838, Side B
Hall and Garrod (Part 2 of 6)

transitory nature of British in India, hard to make friends, had 16 houses in 8 years

again questions interviewers’ interest in India

Kate trained as nurse, ran away to Serbian War

describes her training as nurse under a surgeon in Belgium, promotions, working under a matron, matron made Kate a sister

tried to join voluntary unit, matron prevented her, used other connections to help her join

was in Serbia in 1915, then spent six months at Watermore[?] Castle because her brother was there

people’s dislike of officers in hospitals, nurses prefer lower ranking men because nicer

phone rings, phone conversation

next Kate worked at Red Cross hospital

after war, worked at hospital in London during flu epidemic

friend urged her to go to India

early impressions of India
inability of West and East to understand each other
friction with hospital staff where she worked in India
got to India in 1919, traveled in Northern India, Taj Mahal, Kashmir
wanted to retire in Kashmir, but not possible now
back then, a woman couldn’t go to India and live in a hotel, had to be with friends, if alone you’re not respectable
British can’t understand why Indians think women need protection
the country you’re in dictates what is right and what is wrong
man convinced her to marry and stay in India, first had post in small town
viceroy of India
use of swords, violence, Kate is anti-war
slept in a converted tomb
transferred to Poona at end of 1920
took care of 15 boys as assistant to the secretary
house had only two bedrooms
you don’t have the servants because you want them, husband gets allotment of servants depending on his salary
many expenses in India
even the servants had servants
the servants were mostly very good, trustworthy, loyal
tried not to tempt servants by leaving valuables or alcohol around
night watchmen were criminal tribemen from jail
man who didn’t want a watchman had all his clothing swiped in the night and hung from trees
sadness in life
King Edward VII’s trip to yacht club at Bombay Harbor, yacht clubs segregated between Indian and British
many benefits of joining clubs, including libraries, difficulty in finding books outside Bombay and club-owned libraries
types of books they liked to read
read Sunday Mirrors at club in Borneo to try to learn what ordinary people were doing and thinking
while in Poona, had subscription to have books sent from home, excitement of getting a new book
wrote angry letter about the low quality of the literature sent to her
describes her tastes in books
age of her husband Bill when he arrived in India
features of Poona
Bill’s executive post in Poona, all the people adored him, he worked for the people
fighting for the people to get more money for their rice
phone rings
other officers who supported indigenous people
Bill’s region included people who spoke four different languages
segregated Indian clubs
wealthy club-goers in Bombay
mixed club called “Bi Color Club”
people with different ways didn’t mix well
Bill’s first night in Bombay, stayed in hostel
before war, people who went to India had independent means, didn’t depend on salaries
people thought we lived at ease and did nothing, but it was a very busy life
had no stoves, makeshift furniture made of boxes
business people in India lived luxuriously
British wives had to boil all water and milk and bottle it, way to keep milk cool, worries
about cobras at night, inspecting kitchen once per day
had to make bread, jam, chocolates
huge dam built, luxury of having lots of water
had electric lights but no refrigerators
beautiful place but very lonely for her, she’s from a family of ten
inadequacy of telephones
got short notice that 11-14 people were coming to visit and stay with them
played tennis
bathed daily
houses built off ground to keep away from wild animals
encounter with a cobra near the bookcase
de Caro offers lozenge for interviewee’s cough
they talk about her throat irritation, their recent colds
would like to visit India again