INTERVIEWEES:
Sir Alec Ogilvie  4700.0584  Tape 854.1  (Tape 2 of 2)
Colonel and Mrs. C.A.K. Innes-Wilson  4700.0585  Tape 854.2  (Tape 2 of 4)

IDENTIFICATION:  Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS:  Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES:  British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:
Ogilvie: 3/14/1978
Innes-Wilsons: 3/29/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 33 minutes
Ogilvie: 47 minutes
Innes-Wilsons: 46 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS:  None

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Tape 854, Side A
Ogilvie (Part 2 of 3) (854.1)
000  A more spacious age; most people who went to India came from families where there would be servants in their home in England
006  post-WWII was different
009  his father instructed him not to go into government service in India, but rather business in India, he thinks this happened in many families, the tradition of working where one’s father had
019  he knew what to expect in India
023  those who went out for the first time, went out young, so they adapted well
025  before WWII, no one in his company thought of marrying before age 30; in many companies you weren’t allowed to, and in many cases you couldn’t afford to marry
story about beginning of his business arrangement, asking for a contract and looked at
with a “frozen eye”; he was told that he would have a gentleman’s agreement
he was given a second class passage out to India and told that the next free passage would
be when he retired; they had to pay for a sea passage back on leave
his first tour was four years
in 1946, his wife was the first wife to ever receive payment by his company to go to India
in 1948, the governments produced a “UK Citizens Registration/Act”, it causes problems
about who can be admitted and who cannot
he is thankful that both he and his wife were born in England because otherwise this act
would have prevented them from having British passports; his father was born in India,
his mother was born in Australia, his wife’s two parents were born in South Africa, and
his second son was born in India
the quality of life for businessmen in India before the war was very high
houses were gracious
in the 1940s air-conditioning was introduced; in the 1950s his mother would write his
wife wondering why they didn’t take the children to the hills in the hot weather; they
didn’t because of air-conditioning, more frequent home leaves, and the expense of going
to hill stations
in South India, you can still see older, poorer British who have retired at the hill stations;
they are, “almost unaware that independence happened in 1947”
memories of going on winter trips from Delhi to Shimla as a young child; his English
nanny insisted that the only way to survive such a journey was to dose the children with
caster oil
a lot of nurses ended up marrying army sergeants in the British Army
he still loves overnight train journeys
when he and his wife left India in 1965, they decided to return to England the “old way”
by train to Bombay (42 hours) and by ship to Italy
that was the first time they had been by sea in 18 years because they could get from their
house in Calcutta to the airport quickly and the air journey took in less than half the time
than it still takes to get from Calcutta to Bombay by train
mail steamers arrived in Bombay on Thursdays (P.M.O. Steamship Company) and
departed on Saturdays, therefore Fridays were the day to eat lunch out of your office
pre-war social life; active club life
dropping calling cards in senior officers’ boxes in order to get invited to dinner
sporting life was good in country clubs in Calcutta; there was a long waiting list to get
into them and (embarrassingly) most clubs did not admit Indians until after independence
Indians took it quite well, instead of saying, “you know what you can do with your club!”
the Saturday Club was in the middle of Calcutta, had tennis and squash courts, a
swimming pool, dancing, a resident band; every Monday (in the 1930s) there was a tea
dance outdoors; the Saturday Club was a young unmarried person’s club
the older man’s club like the Bengal Club in London (founded in 1827) did not allow
women
India was more than just sandy deserts, Calcutta had five golf courses, all with green
grass; he had a grass tennis court at his home
there was a huge European population in Calcutta to support these clubs
after independence, people said there were more Europeans in India than in pre-
independence, but that began to die out in the late 1950s and 60s
reasons for decline of Europeans: A) high taxation, B) nationals should do the job if
possible, C) many foreign companies sold out anyway
at one stage, his company had over 200 British people, but declined to 50 by the time he
left; now there are none
during the British Empire, most people had relatives in the British Army in India,
Malaya, Africa, etc.
now young people only venture to places like Spain; he is sad because the Empire gave
the people a much wider world concept
the Anglo-Indian population had the most difficult time during the post-independence
period because the Indians aren’t interested in them
his own children are very interested in hearing about India; his older son now works in
Hong Kong
national current of guilt about only a handful of people handled an empire
returning to England was not difficult; his friends and relations were always asking how
they did without all of their servants; he claims it was absolute bliss
his son returns to England every year
now people can’t afford servants; a young Indian couple would only have one servant
the difference between a young wife going out in the 1930s and one going out after
WWII; later, women had different upbringings in Britain than earlier women; post-war
women worked in England and upon arriving in India and found that there were no jobs
and the housework was done by servants
the most important person to interview when a couple decided to go to India was the
wife; pre-war wives didn’t have as many problems
another pre-war aspect of life, the paying guests (PGs) [like boarders] helped couples
make ends meet
he knew of several cases where the wife ends up marrying the paying guest and the
husband stayed on as the paying guest
riding horses; the Calcutta Light Horse Club
soldiers and ICS members looked down on the business community
“the box swallow” is a peddler and became a derogatory term towards businessmen
looking at old school report and saw that his headmaster’s last comment was, “I’m sorry
this boy is being lost to commerce”
he is now a governor of the same school which is, ironically, kept alive by businessmen
the Indian ICS people (educated in England) were the reasons for smooth transition to
independence
an annual Oxford vs. Cambridge boat race
once you went to one company in India, you did not think of switching to another
in India, his business was Managing Agents; it started due to shortage of management
commercial empires manages steamers, jute mills, coal mines, tea estates, paper mills,
electricity supply companies
these kind of companies are gone because the government hated their power
patterns of being a managing agent
he traveled more in the Indian Army than he did while working for his company
the Scottish were a very dominating influence; most companies he’s referring to have
Scottish backgrounds
there was a conscription of people into the Indian Army during the war, but he joined before conscription
he joined the Second Gorkhas
he was given a booklet with instructions to young officers joining them; one of the solemnly written phrases was “officers are encouraged to save money to buy a polo pony instead of poodle faking [socializing] in the hills”
many words in English have come from the British connection with India such as “pajama” and “bazaar”
and vice versa, so if you want a match in India, you say [dessoli?] which comes from the old British Army connection so that has become an Indian word, now.

Tape 854, Side B
Innes-Wilsons (Part 2 of 5) (854.2)
They were married in Calcutta the day before war was declared
Mrs. Innes-Wilson also had connections to India; her great-great grandfather was a general in the Indian Army; her great grandfather was an administrator; her grandfather was a general in the Indian Army; and her father was in the Indian Army and was killed in WWI
she was a teacher and saved money to visit India; she stayed with a friend and to teach their daughter
there is no future in India unless you go into business; their son wasn’t able to join the Indian Army because it no longer existed
she was the only member of her family who wasn’t born in India; her brother was born on the frontier in Chaman; her sister was born in Karachi; she was born in Dover but taken out to Lucknow; she stayed there until 1914 when her father came back with his regiment
she did not return until later, when she met and married Kenneth in Calcutta
she stayed out the war in Calcutta
Kenneth remembers his childhood better than his wife; he was practically brought up by their Indian servants in Bombay Providence, an Indian state
the boy, [Linden?], who succeeded to the throne in that area was educated in England; they were boyhood friends but lost touch until 1935 when they ran into each other in a hotel in Dehradun
Linden went back to his state in Bombay and reformed it; he was killed in a swimming pool accident shortly afterwards
his mother was a tutor, which was unusual for a woman to do
his wife taught at a boys prep school
a knowledge of what ancestors had done in India (stories, photo albums)
a small circle of families coming out to India generation after generation
types of stories they were told: Indian tales, jungle stories (hunting, observing animals, etc.)
Indian-English relations were good; he thinks some Indians were like Englishmen with brown faces; the Indians he knew were sorry to see the British go
Pakistan treated English with more trust than India did
Indians were less concerned with justice than Pakistan
boundary disputes; British role in resolving them
the biggest boundary dispute he remembers was in Bengal; the Ganges formed the
boundary but had changed its course by several miles over ten years

229 surveying boundaries, some secretly

237 the Boundary Commission did not have a geographer because they did not realize their value

250 river courses and sources made establishing boundaries difficult; this is where the geographer would have been useful

254 returning to India; he finished his training in 1928 as a second lieutenant and had choices of posts and he chose India; his second choice was West Africa; his third was England

284 a lot of competition to go to India; some did not want to go and bought their way into another posting

271 childhood memories, his mother’s stories, and reading (some American books) shaped his expectations of India

282 Mrs. Innes-Wilson’s grandmother told stories about going to the hills for the hot season, but she was surprised when she arrived because India was more modern than in past generations’ lore

287 it was more exciting in India than in England, and he was given authority

297 when he got to the survey he realized his cousin was there

300 preparation: buying clothes from a well-known outfitter, F.P. Baker in London

306 they had to buy new clothes once they got to India; tailoring was easy and cheap in India

311 when people got to India, they were given a teacher

319 the British Army men looked down on the Indian Army men

327 Mrs. Innes-Wilson thought she was only going on a trip during the cold weather; she had purchased a return ticket, but decided she was going to stay even if she had not met her husband; she would have taken a job

340 her mother made her buy a return ticket; most women who were going to meet a future husband did not buy return tickets

365 unmarried girls stayed with their families; this made for the gay life of big towns like Bombay and Calcutta

372 before the war, Calcutta had a bumping club life; the large business community enjoyed themselves socially; the clubs were exclusive, snobbish

394 the “box swallows” (businessmen) treated army officers well, so they could live well on a pauper’s salary

408 it would not have been unusual for women to work in India in jobs like teaching school or tutoring family children [like a governess]

422 they were married in Fort William in the afternoon, as is customary in hot weather; as they stepped out of the church they were met by a dispatch rider who told them that all leave for serving officers was canceled; they were going to honeymoon in Kashmir (2000 miles away) and he had given up his accommodation; so there they were on the evening of their reception, full of champagne, with nowhere to go; so they drove around on their honeymoon until they found a house to move into

436 for Christmas a few months later they stayed outside of Calcutta overnight in a forest/traveler’s’ bungalow that seemed deserted, but unbeknownst to them the cook that they couldn’t find had been eaten by a tiger

480 their first passages to India: she remembers coming through the Suez Canal and seeing camels walking along the edge of the canal; she arrived in Bombay where she was met by family friends; she then took a train
to her, train journeys were exciting--the station noise and people hanging on the trains
when he went overseas to Iraq, she was given a free train passage anywhere in India, so
she took the longest one possible; she went from north India to south India
when he would go on recruiting trips, he was given first-class passages, but his wife was
not; so he solved this by buying two second-class tickets and took her with him
second-class passage allowed them more access to Indian life
story about going into the printing office of the Indian Congress Party and finding them
printing pamphlets saying, “Don’t join the British Army to fight in this Imperialist war”;
they said to him, “What have you come for?”; he said “I’ve come to recruit people to fight
in the Imperialist war”; two of them joined
they were looking for lithographic printers for the making of war maps, so they recruited
a lot of craftsmen from printing offices all over India.