

**T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection**

**Tape 870 Finding Aid**

**INTERVIEWEE NAMES:**

Robin Adair

4700.0592 Tape 870.1 (Tape 4 of 4)

Mr. Stephen Hatch-Barnwell and Mrs. Muriel Hatch-Barnwell

4700.0593 Tape 870.2 (Tape 2 of 3)

**IDENTIFICATION:** Britons in Pre-Independence India

**INTERVIEWER:** Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

**SERIES:** British Voices from South Asia

**INTERVIEW DATES:**

Adair: 4/10/1978, 4/12/1978

Hatch-Barnwells: 4/13/1978

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 34 minutes

**OTHER MATERIALS:** None

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**INDEX**

**Tape 870, Side A**

**Adair (Part 4 of 5) (870.1)**

- 003 they arrived in [Nahar?] in November, which is a beautiful time of year weather wise; there was bright sunshine and fairly warm temperatures during the day and cold at night
- 007 there was a wonderful show of poinsettias there; it was the season for the poinsettias; in northern India, there are many grown in gardens and are widely used in public and private gardens
- 028 India never did seem to be overwhelming; they had been exposed to the type of people they would be meeting as they went along; the gradual change in the populations did not make things so striking
- 039 the beetle chewing habit struck Adair as one of the stranger habits; his first impression was that the whole population was suffering from tuberculosis (until he realized that the people

spit out the beetle juice that gathered in their mouths)

048 one would also notice all the dirty looking crowds full of scruffy looking people dressed in  
rags; the great impact of poverty was only imagined after seeing it

058 there were crowds of people with nowhere to live; for example, many would become  
squatters on the platforms at the train stations and along the streets

064 it was a normal to see a cow holding up traffic in India because the cow was seen as a  
sacred animal; they would not think of driving a cow off the road; the cows that were  
sacred were the Brahman bulls

070 the cows would just lay down in the middle of the street and “doze off”; the traffic had to  
just go around them

076 it was a new scheme for them to get additional training once getting out into the districts; it  
was introduced the year Adair arrived because there had been more recruits than usual to  
the ICS in Bihar; they thought it would be a good idea to get everyone together for  
additional training

082 under normal conditions, such training sessions would be undertaken by the district  
magistrate after posting an assistant magistrate to the district

091 the teachings during training contained practical information; sometimes those giving the  
lessons were experienced district magistrates that had been taken from their former posting  
for this particular cause

098 the experience from running a district for many years allowed the teachers to give insider  
tips and such

101 once you were appointed to a district as an assistant magistrate, you had third class  
magistrate powers and actually heard cases; would be given inspection jobs by the district  
magistrate, often going off with him to help him in the inquiries

109 on one occasion when Adair was an assistant magistrate, the district magistrate wanted  
Adair to accompany him to the site of a dispute; they set out on horseback just the two of  
them

126 Adair’s problem was not being accustomed to extended time in the heat and sun; he was so  
sunburned that his arms completely blistered; he learned to always wear long-sleeved  
shirts after that experience

140 they bought the topees once they got to India because it was normal to wear the topees at  
the time; there were various types: the normal one was called the “Bombay Bowler”, the  
more rugged one had a wider brim and thicker surface called the “Big Skipper” and was  
used for hunting and pig sticking

152 pig sticking was a becoming less and less popular; the participants were normally those of  
the planting community or with the servicemen; everyone would get on horseback armed  
with spears and would chase a wild boar; the object was to stick the boar with the spear

159 it was a dangerous sport because, if you fell, the boars would attack with their tusks; they  
are extremely fast

171 earlier, it was considered bad form to shoot a wild boar; the sporting thing was to “round  
them up” on a pig sticking expedition; it was, however, dying out and seemed to survive  
only in the Northwest Frontier

180 For instance, there were plenty of wild boars in the Bihar area, but there was never an  
opportunity to go hunting for it; they never got around to the actual expeditions

183 Adair supposes that it died out because customs changed, shooting expeditions increased,  
and it became more customary that wild boar was the next best thing after the tigers and

panthers

193 wild boars make very good eating and tastes similar to venison; his wife went with him on one occasion

207 there was a lot of bridge playing in the available spare time; every district headquarters had a club and almost everyone would congregate there; at the clubs there would be tennis courts and squash courts

214 people would go for evening drinks after things like the tennis games; there would usually be a session of bridge for the keen card players in the evening as well

219 there was also a good deal of entertaining, like dinner parties, receptions and visitations of different people in the district; you would think nothing of it to go to a planter's house thirty miles away for a drink

230 there would be about half Indians and half British at the clubs; the British mixed freely with Indians of the same social status; twenty or thirty years earlier, the clubs were mainly British

237 as the Indianization of the services proceeded, which was a definite policy for the British government, training was done to prepare them to become independent; this policy came to its flourish in 1947, which is too early as far as Adair is concerned

243 if the preparation of the Indians to become independent had lasted a few more years, the handover of power could have been done in a more orderly and beneficial way; the bloodshed would have been avoided

247 it was always the intention that India would become independent in due time; it was the policy to Indianize all the services, not just the police and ICS

252 as the process of Indianization continued, the social patterns also changed; instead of socializing only with other British residents, the British began to socialize more and more with their Indian colleagues

257 Adair was only in India for the last ten years of British rule; during this time, fraternization had become complete - the social distinctions were not between Indian and British but between the different ranks of the services

264 the people that belonged to the club would all be of the same social rank; it would also depend greatly on the professions

274 the term "Anglo-Indian" came to be applied to the Eurasians, or those with mixed blood; in the original sense, "Anglo-Indian" meant an Englishman who was a resident or permanent resident in the country; by the time Adair was in India, this definition no longer applied to British but only to the "mixed-bloods"

285 those that were once called Anglo-Indians had no particular name but were mostly called simply British residents

290 there were not any real slang terms to refer to different people, like beginners or old hands; you may call a new comer a "green horn" but there was not any special terminology

295 "poodle faking" meant chasing young girls; it has been used in England, but it tended to be used by the army services in India; the colonel would refer to a young lieutenant that had been "poodle faking" and had been "canoodling" in the jungle with the girlfriend

311 Adair feels it is an outdated term; at a particular period of time (about the 1920s and 1930s) it was used pretty heavily but seemed to die out by the 1940s

328 educated Indians would not regard people like Adair in the same regard as the typical village Indian would, and vice-versa; the villagers would not regard the educated Indians the same as the British either; this feeling had developed between the villagers and the

white rulers

335 they would also apply this to their own people, to some extent, who were in position of a  
district magistrate but not to the same extent that they did to the British

340 it had been a tradition growing up that the British would look after the Indians well; most of  
the Indian members of the ICS were very good and sufficient; there were some, however,  
that were not so keen and thought more about their own career prospects than the  
population's welfare

356 by in large, the English that entered the ICS did do so with a sense of dedication; one may  
have gone in thinking of it solely as a career but very soon the job grew on you, causing you  
to accept the situation and appreciate more of what you were doing

369 the welfare of the people became important for most of those in the ICS; possibly idealistic  
and nothing to be ashamed of

377 the Indian police were also very good from this point of view; the superintendent of the  
police were the #2 to the district magistrate because security aspects were always important  
in a district

388 most of the English that went out to India came out with a good experience of the country;  
almost all of those that went out liked the country and lifestyle; there was plenty to  
complain about but life was interesting with always plenty to do; almost everyone that  
served in India felt the same way

408 it was a case of "the job making the man"; in many cases, those that went out were  
continuing a long tradition of service in India

419 this was not Adair's case, as he had no family ties or experiences in India; he had nothing to  
really call on, but he soon learned the way things were done in India and got the feeling that  
this was what he was called to do in life

423 it was a lifestyle that Adair enjoyed; he would have been happy to stay on if conditions  
were different and Partition had not come when it did; Adair would have made it his full  
career, which he had every intention of doing when he joined the service

431 as a district officer, there were the day to day problems that occupied your time pretty fully;  
if you had a communal disturbance, all of your thoughts and activities would be directed  
toward the trouble and keeping the peace

450 looking back, the instances seem small and petty, but at the time they were very important  
and very worrying; there were tremendous worries and problems that seemed  
insurmountable at times

462 on the whole, the men that went out into such services as the ICS did measure up to the  
responsibilities they were given; you measure up to the job because you gradually work  
yourself into it

474 in the ICS, one had enormous responsibilities at a very young age; being the administrator  
of a district of about 2-3,000,000 people meant that you had the welfare of everyone at  
stake, while you were younger than thirty

494 there would always be a "weird" chap that never seemed to measure up to the standards  
that another had set; on the whole, those in the ICS did measure up, partly because of the  
extensive training and selection

503 in the initial examination, there was a "stiff" written exam and an interview that carried  
more marks than anything else with the Board of Civil Service Commissioners; the board  
would either damn you or accept you based only on one interview; they would sometimes  
make a mistake and miss the "black sheep"

521 the material chosen for the exam and interview was very good in Adair's opinion; the men  
measured up to the standards expected of them

525 the standards were very high and you really had to work for them; you weren't on the job 9  
to 5 but the whole twenty-four hours; one came to accept this, knowing that your work was  
your life

538 there were plenty of odd characters; one was a high court judge's wife, who would appear  
at the club with nothing on but a python around her neck

549 you would come across one or two odd characters, but they were few and far between; the  
standards of propriety were fairly normal

559 putting up a good "front" never really came into the job; you would want to impress your  
superiors, so you would have to put up some sort of a "good show"

567 the provincial government was responsible for the government of the whole province, with  
the chief secretary and a senior concerned; there would then be the divisions, each with a  
divisional commissioner in charge; in each divisions there would be four to five districts  
with a deputy commissioner or collector in charge; each district included three to four  
subdivisions and a subdivisational officer over each

585 everyone had their immediate superior to impress and make the best impression on; both in  
the districts and subdivisions, you saw very little of your superior and you were pretty  
much on your own

599 this is one of the aspects of the job that made you respect and appreciate the job; you did  
not have someone breathing down your neck all of the time and were able to get on with  
your job; they trusted you

606 if things became messy, you would be called in and fairly serious trouble; if you did your  
best and did what was expected, you were left alone; there was very little interference from  
above

623 changing roles, particularly from the ICS to the Foreign Service, was strange to some  
extent; Adair kept close contact with his ex-colleagues from the ICS

629 Adair went to Dhaka to establish the deputy high commissioner's office; he had to rely  
almost completely on the chief secretary of the province of East Pakistan; he spent more  
time in his office getting assistance

649 it made it a lot easier getting help from someone that was in your former line of work than  
having to go to a complete stranger; it was probably this reason that they took on a number  
of ex-ICS officers

658 Adair quickly adapted to the idea of "being on the opposite side of the fence"; the fact that  
he had been in the ICS and a district magistrate made the understanding on both sides  
easier and enabled him to work closely with those in the local government

673 the planting community and the Anglo-Indians or Eurasians had the most difficulty in  
adjusting to independence because they always tended to adapt their customs more towards  
a European way of life

686 the Anglo-Indians would find it particularly difficult when the European way was leaving  
them with no standards to live up to

694 Adair knew many Anglo-Indians, some being in high positions; the Inspector General of  
Police in [Pabna?] was from an old Anglo-Indian family, although he lived completely by  
European standards

717 the change from independence was traumatic for a lot of different people; Adair had some  
of the villagers come to him while he was in Dhaka and ask him why he left India and

wanting the British rule back  
730 end of side A

### **Tape 870, Side B**

#### **Hatch-Barnwells (Part 2 of 3) (870.2)**

005 they did not have running water when Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell was a young girl; the water  
was stored in the house in a large cool room that was very dark during the day; the water  
was put into large vessels and placed inside these rooms to kept cool  
011 oil lamps gave a beautiful glow in the evenings and were lovely at night; there was a man  
servant whose main job was to clean the lamps  
016 the coolies would carry the adults up to the hill stations; the children were strapped to a  
coolie's back, with their legs hanging down; the speed getting up to the hill stations was  
amazing  
021 you would always take your servants with you to the hill station; there were grand houses  
and fascinating times when Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell was younger  
025 they then went to England to attend school  
028 you sent the children back to England mainly for health reasons; after about age six,  
children tended to turn very pale and ill due to a lack of vitamins in the food; six was  
considered old enough to leave a child  
037 there seemed to be a lack of quality schools in India; the Americans had a good one in  
Shimla, so everyone went there  
044 going home and going out was very exciting; she and her sister went back out to India right  
before the war  
054 if you wanted a slow journey, you would go all the way to India on the Orient Line; some  
preferred to get off at Calcutta and make the journey on land to catch a glimpse of India  
065 when traveling by water, you travel in luxury; the companies advertise by the luxuries; it's  
sad to think that they no longer sail out there  
080 they talk about the different ships that could be taken; all the ships were air conditioned and  
enclosed, giving you no idea that you were traveling at all  
090 you got leave once every four years because it took so long to get to England and back  
again; leave lasted about eight months, coming every four years  
096 you tried to avoid staying in England longer than six months because you would then have  
to pay income tax  
099 the voyage out and the voyage in each took about a month  
101 you paid income tax in India; the taxes in England, however, were much higher than those  
in India; if you got caught, you had to pay the "Double Tax"-one tax in England and the  
other in India  
105 as long as he was a bachelor, Hatch-Barnwell stayed with his parents when he went back to  
England  
125 you were allowed a certain number of leaves while you were in the service; if you took  
sick, you took one of those leaves to go home; you can take an extra one only if you paid  
for it  
129 local leave came more often and came off of your leave account, except for the two long  
batches of holidays that they received  
131 one of the long leaves was for Christmas, when you received about seven or eight days  
leave; there was another leave for eleven days during the Hindu holidays, which came one

after another  
 139 if you were off on the holiday, you went somewhere with nice shooting; you would mostly  
 shoot birds, with the occasional opportunity to shoot something larger  
 152 there was wonderful fishing in Kashmir; the scenery was also very nice; one couple stayed  
 on a very nice houseboat while the other stayed on a very cramped and hot one  
 159 you arrived at a holiday firm that organized the fishing trips; you chose which servants you  
 wanted; there was a shop that you would purchase all of your tackle  
 165 you would arrive first thing in the morning and get your licenses; you would then set off  
 after about an hour  
 187 when taking a trip to Kashmir, they were once forced to go up the mountain backwards;  
 when traveling, they would take all the servants with them  
 202 you would arrange for the houseboat before hand  
 206 there was a myth that there was once a female that would attract people to the lake; the  
 people would fall into the water and drown because of her; they would feel “drawn” to the  
 water, which was a fairly normal thing  
 222 the women would throw themselves into the water, although they did not know how to  
 swim, and just float; they would teach themselves how to swim and how to love the water  
 239 a friend of the Hatch-Barnwell, Joyce, had a house that was about 400 years old in England  
 that had a ghost; people would be at a party there when a girl would just walk through the  
 center of the room and yell “Where am I, where am I ?”; the whole room would change to  
 an old-fashioned theme  
 250 Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell did not believe her until when she went and stayed with Joyce; she  
 heard footsteps in the hall, only to see a figure in grey walk into the lavatory; she did not  
 know she had seen a ghost until she asked Joyce about the girl in grey  
 258 Joyce then became agitated because neither she nor her husband had ever seen the ghost  
 262 there were many ghost legends everywhere in India  
 264 in Dhaka, they would hear footsteps upstairs near the bedrooms; when they would go  
 upstairs, the son would be fast asleep; while taking a nap in the afternoon, she would feel a  
 presence that was not her son  
 286 ghosts were very enchanting  
 287 there were all sorts of ghost legends for all the different houses in India  
 292 there were superstitions, such as not opening your mouth at certain times because a ghost  
 could fly in or not walking backwards because the ghost would cause you to do so for the  
 rest of your life  
 295 these type of legends were mostly local legends  
 298 the mutiny barely touched Bengal because it was all “up country”, so there were no ghost  
 legends from the mutiny  
 303 when Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell was going to re-meet Steven after Partition, they spent the day  
 with the Inspector General of Police; everything seemed to be very calm  
 314 many places had not seen a European besides the British; the first time Mrs. Hatch-  
 Barnwell went out on tour with her husband, they could not get over her; they could not tell  
 if she was a man or woman because she was in trousers with long blonde hair  
 325 touring allowed them to see many of the different states  
 326 when surveying, you went out with two horses, an elephant and three carts full of luggage;  
 you would leave camp every morning after breakfast, only to rejoin your camp at the next  
 camp site

335 in the evening at the new camp site, your tent would already be prepared; everything was  
there and ready

338 if you were late, your bearer would show up with whiskey; it was very well organized  
339 every drop of water had to be boiled, so camp had to be set up early enough to allow for the  
water to boil and then cool enough to drink; you needed a good number of servants just to  
get the chores done

344 when touring together, Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell would go with Mr. Hatch-Barnwell because  
most of the time it involved giving out prizes and rewards at different schools or doing  
things; she once had to inspect the women's prison while he inspected the men's

353 if a district commissioner did not have a wife, a man would normally do it because they  
were not all that fussy about things like that in Bengal

361 in east Bengal, bicycle was the most practical mode of transportation because you could  
not keep horses there; you had about five miles of road and that was it

381 the steamers were a triangular service; going to Calcutta you had to go by cooler, where  
you got on the train and continued on

388 you could not get to East Bengal without going by steamer (unless you wanted to go a long  
way around)

397 the steamers were privately owned; there were steam launches that were very big affairs  
409 both brothers worked in the same district, just at different times; Steven was the district  
magistrate

417 there was also a large house boat that would sometimes be attached to the launch to give  
extra accommodations; there was not a whole lot of room for families

424 the boats were not that slow, going about ten miles per hour; some were faster than others;  
the May Queen was very speedy

432 the coast is a mass of islands; the Ganges and the Brahmaputra ran through the middle of  
the district and went to the east; the sand was "dazzling white"

451 the islands were well populated; there was practically no uncultivated land; holdings were  
fairly large by certain Bengal families; land was expensive

461 one of the snags of the service was having to adjust to the different places; it seemed that as  
soon as you go settled in, you were reassigned to another station

466 you had to learn the internal politics of a district in order to know what was going on  
470 in the middle of a seniority stage, you usually stayed for some time; they did not like for  
you to stay more than two years in one particular district because you would learn too much

474 when you were on the point of promotion, if one job came to an end then somewhere would  
be found for you for about a month or two

486 when coming back from leave, you would be scheduled for one district but would be  
posted somewhere else if the man in charge of your posting at the time of your return had  
not gone on leave

490 districts had their own seniorities that contributed to the frequency of change; for example:  
Dhaka was the senior district of the province and when the most senior in Dhaka was  
moved, and then the next in line took his place

496 there was not an official scale of seniority for the districts, only in practice; usually a new-  
comer would be given a smaller district; somebody that was experienced would be sent to  
one of the more important districts

503 "senior scales" refers to pay scales; you started as joint magistrate and collector, which had  
a certain pay scale; upon reaching promotion point, you would be promoted to the next

scale, which was district magistrate; secretary to the government or commissioner was the next step up

515 when in between two levels, you would usually find yourself with a lot of short posting  
 527 you got used to life being unsettled and constantly moving; a complication was that the houses were never furnished; you had to buy your own furniture

535 you would want durable furniture; decent furniture was not hard to find, both locally and imported

545 every plot of land was mapped and the owner's name recorded; they prepared a map of internal structure; there were terrific scales; it was a semi-judicial operation

572 during the touring season you would spend about twenty-five days a month "running around and around and around" inspecting

576 once prepared, these records served as great litigation tools and valuable evidence in cases; the maps gave a picture of the district at a given date

582 if you were seeking proof of change after that date, you had to show how that change came across to you

585 "The Survey of India" dealt with some unmapped parts; they provided the original framework while the provincial survey was geared onto that; they were doing the fitting

598 it sometimes proved to be very confusing

613 state acquisition required all rent-receiving interests to be recorded

629 they left in 1966

633 there were hardly any changes in the actual administration after Partition; when they left, administration was exactly the same

640 not many stayed on in East Pakistan after Independence; Hatch-Barnwell stayed "because it was nice there"

644 he did not know what would happen; they received all of their promotions and decorations in time; he never went to the central government

658 in the beginning of their service, the women were heavily veiled; after Partition, all the women had to go around heavily veiled again; they would often say their sandals were too heavy because they would go shuffling around in them

693 they eventually got them walking better than shuffling

700 women that joined the army were not allowed to see their commanding officer; they would go into a room with a screen-he could not see them and they could not see him; the voice would come through and give them their orders

707 the women eventually emerged very militant; they could do almost anything better than the men themselves, but it had to be behind a screen most of the time

716 no one could ever watch them carry out their orders except the other women; no one could tell how they were doing it and if they were doing it properly or not

727 this was just after Partition; Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell was made an honorary colonel for her role in preparing the women

735 after this, the women began coming out on their own

744 end of tape