

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

**Tape 869 Finding Aid**

**INTERVIEWEE NAMES:**

Robin Adair

4700.0592      Tape 869.1    (Tape 3 of 4)

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

4700.0593      Tape 869.2    (Tape 1 of 3)

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

**INTERVIEWERS:**      Frank de Caro and 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, 35 minutes

Adair: 62 minutes

Hatch-Barnwells: 33 minutes

**OTHER MATERIALS:**      None

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**Tape 869, Side A**

**Adair (Part 3 of 5) (869.1)**

- 002    there was a bear that was responsible for mauling some of the children from the outlying areas; Adair was contacted to satisfy the demand of the villagers to take care of the bear; he was the district commissioner at the time
- 006    Adair went out there and stayed the night with one of the ex-planters; the next morning, the local sub-inspector of the police came with them to add to the number of guns for the party that was going in search of the bear
- 019    the villagers had a rough idea of where the bear was; it had gotten into a small, thick jungle not far from the village

- 025 they tried to scare the bear out, but it did not work; they surrounded the jungle area and gradually began to make their way inward; Adair saw the bear, but he could not make out which part of the bear it was; Adair shot at him to flush him out. The bear turned and charged him, walking on its hind legs
- 039 the bear must have only been slightly wounded because he did seem to be impaired at all; it was a terrifying sight; Adair gave him another shot that did not kill him, but was enough to knock him off his feet and cause the bear to roll down the hill; they then finished him off at the bottom of the hill
- 050 there was a lot of duck and geese shooting in the swampy areas; during the cold weather after the monsoon, there would be large stretches of water from the monsoon rains that had filled the area; this allowed for a perfect shooting area for birds
- 059 Adair never really did do any bird shooting; he did it once or twice though; the British community was very keen on it though; Adair liked the big game shooting
- 064 you never really had many opportunities to go big game shooting; you had to be invited by a maharajah to join in one of the large shoots; smaller scale shoots would be organized by the British planters
- 070 the planters usually did not marry into the local community; they were considered Anglo-Indian when they did marry into Indian society; they mostly tried to remain completely British, marrying a girl out from England
- 075 many of them had been there for generations; this community has all but died out now, except for the area in southern India; they find there are many amenities in India that are unavailable at home, like differences in climate and domestic service
- 095 the farmers in northern Bihar were always very nice and hospitable; they were always willing to receive outside visitors to relieve some of the monotony
- 101 when Adair was in Dhaka after Partition, tea planters were a widely separated community, sometimes as much as forty miles between two plantations; each plantation was a little community in and of itself
- 106 there would be a garden manager and his assistant, perhaps both with families; they may be British; there would be a good many Indian servants and a large community of tea garden laborers
- 113 the best tea was grown in the hills, with some of the plantations being between 500-600 feet above sea level; the area was flat enough to see Dhaka, which was only about twenty-three feet above sea level and 200 miles away
- 124 in other districts, there would be small, rolling hills; this is a different type of country and tea grown here also
- 129 most of the plantations have been taken over and nationalized, as well as some of the labor and managers
- 134 the planters also sent their children back to England to be educated; they tried to keep up the standards and tried to educate their children in England if at all possible
- 137 there were some good English schools, especially in the hill stations
- 145 the planter communities had great traditions; they were always keen on riding and polo playing; Adair was never able to play polo, but he was trained for it and did have a horse
- 153 Adair was forced to get rid of his horse once the war came ; he bought a jeep instead, which was also very helpful in getting around on the bad roads
- 157 Adair went into the Indian army during the war; Adair was in charge of recruitment in the areas and raised many pioneer battalions, which were mainly labor cores used for trenching

and such

167 the Biharies were very open to the idea; Adair would go around holding recruitment  
parades and getting a good many of people to enlist

170 the main problem there was staying up with the physical standards; Adair would tour with  
a medical service captain, who would examine the recruits before Adair would send them  
according to their qualifications

181 the physical standard was relatively low among the people that were applying for  
recruitment

185 Adair did this for most of the war; he was squandered from the ICS to the Indian army; he  
was promoted in the army, reaching the rank of Major

191 his headquarters was Patna; he was under the overall colonel for recruitment for the Indian  
army who was based in Lucknow; he would go and visit Adair from time to time; Adair  
was completely in charge of the Bihar area

198 he would tour and organize with honorary recruiting officers all over; the officers would  
call the would-be recruits together and Adair would go out on a set day, examine them and  
actually enroll them into the army

204 Adair belonged to the Officer's Mess in Lucknow; when he visited there, which was  
normally more than a few days at a time; he had no normal officer's mess

212 the [Kosmahal?] collections were a sort of land revenue; "Kosmahal" literally means  
government land, land owned by the government leased out to tenants; the tenants pay rent  
for the land and is the Kosmahal revenue

220 the district magistrate was also called collector because he was the collector of government  
revenues; they would also collect taxes

227 each district magistrate's office and subdivisional offices had their own treasury; verifying  
the treasury was a tedious process operation that had to be done on a regular basis; you had  
to count out all the money, like a banker's operation

233 all the revenue from the Kosmahal came into the treasury; they also kept postage stamps;  
they were also in charge of keeping written totals of everything

238 the administration carried out by the district officer covered every aspect of administration  
of the country; this made the job so interesting because you knew everything and had to  
control everything that went on

245 the taxes were paid in cash, which is one of the reasons why the treasury was always full of  
money

250 the [Chokedah?] system was a system of rural police that came under the police; they  
would normally be paid by the police but Adair would hold spot checks and paper raids to  
ensure they were getting their proper salaries

258 some of the junior police people were capable of withholding money, covering it up and  
slipping it in their own pockets; there would be complaints and Adair would have to inquire  
and take evidence to see who was right and who was wrong

265 the Chokedah paper raids would call for Adair to take over the function of the  
sub-inspector of police, who would normally pay them on that occasion

272 the physical money would go to the provincial government; Adair's office would have a  
budget they would have to adhere to

282 the [Punjaps?] were local officers like the Chokedah system; they were local chiefs; being  
appointed as a "Punch" means that he has a certain amount of authority and is looked up to

292 great care had to be taken when appointing someone; the right person needed to be picked,

which is why Adair was in charge of revising the system; sometimes someone had to be  
 dismissed and the position refilled with someone more qualified  
 302 the district magistrate or subdivisional officer is automatically chairman of the local school  
 committee  
 321 Adair would supervise processions mainly for security purposes; he had to ensure that the  
 arrangements were following the determined route and not going into the areas that would  
 cause conflict  
 344 it was partly because of his family that Adair moved from the consulate service to the ICS;  
 his family did not like the idea of him going off to such places as Bangkok or Peking; they  
 thought he would be in Egypt or somewhere easily accessible  
 353 air travel was not common in those days, so Adair would have had to travel by boat; his  
 family was uncomfortable with him having to be on a boat so long as to get all the way to  
 China; Adair decided India would be a lot easier to get to and from when compared to  
 China  
 365 looking back after all this time, Adair thinks that, career wise, it would have been better to  
 go into the consulate service “then and there”; he would not have been forced to “change  
 horses in midstream” so he would have done better  
 394 the war made more of a psychological change rather than anything else; it brought the  
 government’s effort to the war and they were not able to concentrate on political activities;  
 this gave the Indian politicians more time and space to promote their own ideas  
 403 there was a different attitude, more of an emancipation idea after the war; there was cry for  
 independence not only in India, but in most of the colonial empire  
 413 going out was an interesting experience because the roads were so bad; there would be  
 nothing to the journey now; there were no roads in those days, only signposts that were  
 supposed to be there, indicating which way to go  
 425 there were three difficulties of the journey; one was going through Turkey to get to Beirut,  
 mostly because the ruler of the time was anxiously promoting railways; he wanted all  
 traffic to go by rail, so there were barely any roads or any maintenance on existing roads  
 443 there was one time when they got bogged down in the mud and had to get a herd of oxen to  
 pull them out; they were unlucky in that there had been heavy rains in Turkey before they  
 went through  
 450 the second part of the journey was crossing into Baghdad from Damascus; there was  
 “demand transport”, which were huge land convoys that dashed across the desert at around  
 sixty miles per hour; this was the normal way of getting from Damascus to Baghdad  
 460 they all thought they would tag along with the convoys; they began with the convoy, but  
 got left behind on their own; they had the choice of going back and waiting for the next  
 convoy or to forge ahead; the other option meant a two or three day delay  
 469 they had the hope of catching up with the convoy, although it was a slight chance; they  
 never saw another convoy and were on their own the whole way across  
 477 you had to get permission from the police in Damascus to exit; they got permission only  
 because they were tagging along with the convoy  
 486 it was a hard-surfaced desert covered with sharp flint stones; it was flat as far as you could  
 see; they got about eighteen punctures on the way across; it took about four days and four  
 nights to get across, normally done within two days  
 502 there was no road at all to follow; there was a certain amount of indication from the wagons  
 of the land convoy that had just passed through; if the wind had blown the dust away, there

was nothing to follow  
 510 signposts were supposed to be every five kilometers, but some of them had been stolen;  
 when you had gone five kilometers you would stop and look for a sign, desperately hoping  
 you were going in the right direction; when you could not find it you would press on,  
 hoping to find one in the next five kilometers  
 519 the third difficult part of the trip was crossing into Balochistan from the south of Iran; the  
 mountains were fairly high, with bitter cold winds blowing down from them  
 528 there was still no road, only a faint track to follow; they broke a spring on the car, which  
 delayed them some more  
 545 they had packed an extra spring for the back of the car because they thought it would go  
 first; to their amazement, it was the front spring that went out and was three inches shorter  
 than the rear one; they had to eventually cut through the spare and overlap it  
 563 the journey was about 8,000 miles or so from London to Calcutta; the first part was a quick  
 tour through Europe; they took the scenic route in part of Europe and then again around  
 Beirut  
 601 crossing the Indus River was another interesting thing because the dry weather caused the  
 Indus to be low; they got stuck a few times in the sandbars going across  
 614 they then went to Lucknow and saw the Golden Temple; it is a building the in middle of a  
 lake and is covered in gold leaf; it's the shrine of the Sikhs  
 631 they went out of their way to see the Taj Mahal; they wanted to see as much as they could  
 along the way and knew it was not going to be a quick trip out; the whole journey took  
 about three months  
 639 they had to get special permission from the Indian office before doing this; they gave them  
 the equivalence of their C-class passage to spend as they saw fit; they used some of it to  
 buy the car, only to sell it in Calcutta for more than they paid for it  
 654 up until then, no one had ever done that; there was another carload of their colleagues that  
 did the same trip after they did it  
 676 they had a very helpful guide from the A.A.; they gave them a complete route, done so by  
 putting sections together because it had never been done before; it was extremely useful  
 688 they almost fought in Balochistan because some of the locals had surrounded them, but  
 they were only interested in what they were doing and were not hostile  
 712 their perception of India was very different than that of the country they had just gone  
 through; it was rugged and mountainous; dramatic mountains on the horizon with cliffs  
 722 they had a warm welcome when they entered India from one of the officer's messes; they  
 were invited in and given a warm reception  
 730 end of Side A

### **Tape 869, Side B**

#### **Adair (Part 5 of 5) (869.1)**

006 the change after Independence came from the political minority, not the great majority of  
 the villagers; 90% of people live in villages; they are the real backbone of the country and  
 not politically minded at all  
 011 those that are semi-educated in the towns are the ones that have become politically  
 conscious; they are the ones that are making the most noise about independence; this  
 applies not only to India, but to other parts of the world as well  
 017 the majority of the village population, the agriculturalists, were only interested in

reasonably good government that saw to it that things ran smoothly, that they were not oppressed by the land owners and were not forced to pay excessive taxes; this was done while the British were in India; the villagers did not really want a change

031 there were many cases that came up that dealt with land ownership; the ownership of land is the main requirement to prosperity; no matter how small of a plot one may have, it was something that the villager put first above all else

041 there were survey records that helped in settling disputes; the case would be argued by the local villagers, hearing both sides

046 one would always go to the sight of the dispute; there would also normally be an inquiry held at the site

055 the boundaries were marked by little raised mounds of earth

059 the rice patty fields were enclosed the water necessary for the crop; the mounds formed around the fields acted as the boundary

068 the dispute normally centered on someone attempting to change the boundary, trying to dig the earth away a few feet and create a new boundary in a slightly new position

072 the original boundaries were marked on the large-scaled survey maps; you went by the maps; this was why they were taught surveying during training

081 there was a survey about every twenty years; you would have records of surveys from about twenty years back

086 it was an accepted system there; Adair believes that they have continued with this system now that the British have gone; there is very little differences in the villages now than when Britain ruled India

095 the job was widespread and not confined to one particular aspect; one did what was needed of him at the time

099 each district headquarter town was a fairly sized town, about 60-80,000 inhabitants; the subdivisional headquarter towns were smaller

111 the district officer's bungalow would be somewhere on the outskirts of the town; it would have extensive grounds; the district magistrate's bungalow was government maintained and furnished; you had some of your own private furniture, but the main basis would be from the government

125 Adair never had any time to paint because he was always too busy; he's sorry in a way that he never had a chance to paint mementoes of his time in the ICS

130 a job in the ICS was such a full time job that no one really had time to have any other hobby but work; painting is also a time consuming project that requires spare time

137 the people back in England were probably oblivious to the affairs in India; there was very little contact

139 the central government people in the government of India in Delhi and the provincial headquarters would have direct contact with White Wall, which was the India office

144 the India office thought that there was no need to interfere if things were running smoothly; they would let them get on with their job; this was the case on the spot

147 the divisional commissioner let his district officers get on with their jobs, who in turn would let their subdivisional officers get on with theirs

149 there was always plenty to do without having to breathe down someone else's neck

151 Adair was never bothered by any British officials coming out from England to tour; there were occasional visits by visiting a MP, but it was generally left to allow the government to get on with its own

- 160 if there had been visiting delegates, one would have done his best to show him around and let him see what he wanted; beyond that, Adair cannot really say what would have happened
- 164 it is very true that you have to be in India for a while before you can get a complete understanding for the country; to get a real idea of the lifestyle there; a superficial visit of a few days or weeks is inadequate
- 173 the traditions of the service and such varied drastically from province to province
- 177 Bihar and Bengal both had a different way of doing things; one may have placed more emphasis on a certain thing, where the other would concentrate on something else
- 184 end of interview

### **Tape 869, Side B cont'd**

#### **Hatch-Barnwells (Part 1 of 3) (869.2)**

- 185 beginning of interview
- 191 his family had Indian connections, but he did not know about it; his grandmother was in India at one time; his great grandfather may have been killed in the mutiny
- 200 at one of his postings, he happened to come in contact with his mother's first cousin
- 212 Hatch-Barnwell does not really know what motivated him to join the I.C.S.; they enjoyed traveling and it seemed to be a promising opening; they had no family businesses or such to keep them in England
- 218 Hatch-Barnwell went first, followed by his younger brother two years later; they were both in Bengal
- 222 Hatch-Barnwell only got in because there was a vacancy after one man was assassinated; he would have been very happy to choose Bengal if he was given the chance to choose now
- 228 he went out in 1933; the terrorist activities were still going on, although they had begun to taper off
- 232 the terrorists observed the rules of sport and did not aim to shoot young officers; they were very selective in their shooting
- 238 they would go after someone with a definite reason; anyone that was prominent and popular with the locals and those that went against tradition or were next for succession
- 245 there was one raid that was spectacular because no one was killed, even though it was a weapons raid
- 251 weapons were not easy to come by in those days
- 253 they raided the army and got away with a lot of things
- 266 terrorism was tapering off when Hatch-Barnwell got there, it had seemed to have passed its peak; they had a shot at the governor after that however
- 272 the new, young probationary officers were once required to sit down with a gun in their pockets, although they never had the opportunity to use it
- 277 before going out, there was a year of training in England
- 286 they would receive a circular; there was also an equipment list of things that would be required; occasionally someone would come back on leave and would give a lecture about living in India
- 296 the list of things to buy was fairly reasonable; they joke about a morning coat and how the list never said to have a thick or thin one, but they did get a chance to use it for required occasions
- 307 Hatch-Barnwell estimates that he attended between three and five different governor balls

and such; after Independence, senior uniforms were abolished and the nice coat became official wear

319 Hatch-Barnwell never realized that Bengal was a cold country in the winter, so he took only what he had gotten; when he got back on his first leave, he came home in rags

336 they sailed out to Bombay when they went out; there was a boat that went straight to Calcutta, but it would have taken months to come in

342 your passage to Bombay was paid, and that was the end of it; you got your railway fare and such back from the government later

347 Hatch-Barnwell had no idea or expectations about India before he went out; he had read Kipling, but he really had no expectations

362 the excitement of seeing the east for the first time was memorable on his first voyage out; the voyage out for Hatch-Barnwell was just like the passage out for anyone else

368 one did not buy a topi before arriving in Calcutta

372 they traveled from Calcutta to Bombay by train

378 like many Indian stations, Hatch-Barnwell's first station seemed to be one of those stations that were "just too big" for everyone to have to get on to and too small to avoid contacts

383 it was the stereotypical "Kipling-esque" area; there were the un-pleasantries and scandals

394 one was on probation when they first arrived; you were put into the office to work as an ordinary clerk, trying to learn the system from the bottom up

401 one did learn something from every department; you would learn things just by doing ordinary case work

409 for a year you would work as a clerk; when you figured out how the system worked, you would be someone's boss the following year

416 the first station Hatch-Barnwell was stationed was in a district the was about 2500 square miles

440 the Indians had been in the services long enough to be able to work "just the same"

450 there was a English missionary group there; the Catholic missions were more effective

461 there was not much contact with the missions; in other places there was more contact; when you went around the country, you would normally get invited to a local mission just to cheer everyone up and say "hello"

470 the Catholics lived down to the level of the people; they would get the same pay as a typical Indian servant usually, about 35 rupees a month or less than three pounds a month

491 Hatch-Barnwell's brother was stationed in Dhaka; the governor came up there to visit

495 every station had a class; as a general rule, only the officials would belong to a club but there were other members, like generous donors or local rajahs

504 there were planters only in certain districts; there were only two districts that had any planters at all

514 there were other plantations, but tea was the dominant crop; a sugar mill would have a sugar plantation, all Indian owned and operated

518 the government was involved in plantations by requiring an annex license

525 the government had a type of monopoly, but it was not a serious source of revenue; you could not let down "your right hand"

533 almost all of the lower paid workers were opium addicts, possibly because it kept them going; almost all the farmers were addicts; it did not seem to cause much harm but it was looked down upon socially

559 Hatch-Barnwell was married in 1942; Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell went out as part of the "fishing



fleet”; they met at a riding party out in the country while he was on the land revenue  
commission  
605 the parents of the girls were out in India  
614 they had gotten into the idea of “romantic India” with balls at the governor’s house, being  
escorted by those in the army; the girls were not allowed to mix with businessmen  
637 it was a curious custom to meet the men; the men were allowed fifteen minutes to say their  
“hellos” and “goodbyes” and to see if they were on the lists; it was a curious custom  
646 if they were on the list, they would be invited back to the house for a dinner party, with  
someone there playing the piano and singing  
652 the calling card would include the name and the service  
674 if a junior officer failed to call on a senior officer, questions would be asked; you had about  
a three week grace period  
680 there was a regulation list on who to call on; every station had its own list; in an out station  
there was an unwritten list because everyone knew who needed to be called upon; it was  
mostly a social custom  
707 Mrs. Hatch-Barnwell was born in India; she remembers very little from her childhood, but  
there are some memories  
733 end of tape