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Tape 873 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAME:

Ivan Ellis Jones 4700.0594 Tape 873.1 (Tape 3 of 4)
Mr. Douglas C. Fairbairn and Mrs. Agnes Fairbairn 4700.0595 Tape 873.2 (Tape 1 of 2)

IDENTIFICATION: Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS: Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan

SERIES: British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:

Jones: 4/22/1978

Fairbairns: 4/24/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 34 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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INDEX

Tape 873, Side A

Jones (Part 5 of 6) (873.1)

- 002 Jones was once approached by a man looking to see if a convicted prisoner would be allowed an appeal
- 006 he claimed that the court magistrate had closed his court too late for it to be done; Jones told him if he had all his people ready, they would be allowed to execute the document
- 011 Jones told them to show the order to the guard if he objected
- 013 a young officer came in later and said that he had carried out the orders: he held up the train for twenty minutes
- 015 the station master came by about ten minutes later saying that Jones could not do this and that these were not the rules of a district magistrate; claimed the railway and rail stations were under the jurisdiction of the station master, not the guard
- 020 it was then that Jones learned that they all had to keep a diary; they had to answer only for the delays that occurred during their running time
- 024 Jones apologized and the station master told him that it was alright because he was able to

make up time
027 there was a story of a man that saw a road full of trees; he asked the officer how many trees
were there, and the officer replied that he did not know
029 he then asked the junior officer the same question, getting an answer of 257 (although he
really did not know either)
030 the officer then demoted the junior officer for “going over orders”
034 there was a tendency toward eccentricity; there were plenty of people to humor
039 the word “Anglo-Indian” had various meanings at various times; it has been used to refer to
those of “mixed blood” or it could refer to the British rajah; Jones used both definitions
045 they talk of other words in the Indian vocabulary and how such words can mean one thing
but refer to two different things
051 they talk of how the alteration of just one or two letters in a word could change the entire
meaning and use of a word
055 there have been several Arabic words that have migrated into their languages
064 the Koran would not be referred to as “Koran” by Muslims, who use a word that means
noble
067 at the beginning of the war, Jones was moved into the Cooperative Department; he had
been a district officer
071 the cooperative movement had started earlier that century, bought on by a found
commissioner’s report
074 it started with legislation incorporating cooperative societies and a staff to promote them
076 the Punjab registrar had a staff of assistant registrars in each district; it over-flowed into the
Frontier province as well
078 they started the first agricultural cooperation by lending money to village banks to help
people finance operations
079 there was a slight tendency to regard cooperative organizations as a substitute for thrift; in
truth, it offered a machinery through which energy, thrift and so on could be channeled to a
great advantage
082 it came on very well in the districts in which the people were naturally thrifty; some
districts were opposed to borrowing at all
085 those that borrowed sometimes tended to not be the thriftiest ones
087 decades later, they are still trying to recover those bad debts
088 it became extremely successful, with about 20,000 banks in the Punjab
089 there were union banks that were federations; there were district banks that were larger
federations; there was a provincial bank that worked with the capital of several million
pounds and acted as a balancing center
092 there were various types of moral and improvement activities that were also started
because of the cooperative, such as “Better Living Societies”
094 the thing they could do was try to reduce the scale of expenditures for such things as
weddings; a wedding could leave a family bankrupt for life
098 they suggested to both families to join a society that did not bind them to anything except
accept standards that they themselves would lay down
104 the societies were registered as cooperative societies but not tied in at all; they were all very
distinct
105 they were quite effective in some areas; you are able to mobilize the people and you give
them an organization
106 society became a legal cooperation

109 there was also the consolidation of holdings, in which the aid of the cooperative
organization allowed for inherited lands to be pooled together into a society
124 land holdings were no longer scattered about; they would sort out the holdings and take
other lands, but only by consent which could take years, but there were special staff
appointees that understood the land and cooperative systems to aid in the agreements
129 it was through this that millions of acres of land were consolidated
131 the Cooperative Department was a political government department; Jones was a registrar
for about five years
134 early founders had a missionary temperament that succeed very well in the best areas
136 there was also the problem of erosion, caused by numerous grazing goats destroying
vegetation to the extent that the top soil started to wash away
141 Jones's first district had a terrible erosion problem; one-tenth of the agricultural area in that
district was under sand
150 there were the options of contour trenches, creating downs that would hold the plants and
gradually bring back vegetation
155 local support and cooperation was necessary for any option to be successful
157 special staff from the forestry and other departments was brought to work in these areas
159 some would exercise their right to give up their grazing rights for a certain number of years
to the village committee, who would control the grazing under suggestion from the various
departments
162 these programs also had great success; there were areas that were nothing but sand, now the
people are complaining that the reeds have grown up to such a height that they are suffering
165 it was a remarkable sight to see the insides becoming clothed with vegetation; the programs
were very satisfying
168 Jones was in the Cooperative Department for about five years
169 near the end of those five years, they were swept up into trading
171 the Punjab was more than happy to help feed a neighboring area that had been struck by
famine; they also had to feed the army
175 it came with warning because there were a few cooperative commission shops that were
marketing grain in the different markets as commission agents
178 the producer would come in with his wagon load, which was negotiated for
183 the shops were not terribly successful because they were going against the most acute
business minds, the Hindu merchants
186 a British officer did not shake the dominant positioning of the merchants, but they were
beginning
187 Jones was suddenly given a check for one million pounds and told to go and buy a store of
wheat because there was none left; they had to later build a storage area for it
195 Jones could not keep the wheat on the principle of "no losses"; the point was learning to
balance of funds and price control; they did not lose too much
201 there was a Hindu that helped Jones out a great deal; he had a doctorate in marketing
205 they had to organize a system for the sampling of the wheat that was being sold; the
samples were weighed and examined for tears, fallen grains, etc.; the payment was based
on these samples
212 the testers had to be organized and had to start from scratch; they managed to survive
without a major collapse or something awful going on
215 an accounts officer was employed to devise plans for the rules of accounting
219 having officers become adept to various kinds of jobs and areas was the theory of the Civil

Service; you should be able to tackle and master any problem
225 Jones studied town planning, which he never went very far in
228 the British administration was geared towards the generalists in this area; Jones does not
know if they are getting in touch with more specialists now
230 they all worked together; Jones does the original training of over half of his colleagues;
they were all of a “pretty good” quality
234 there was not much fear and anxiety associated with the job, although Jones says he would
hesitate taking on those types of jobs now
238 one would go into the jobs quite happily and cheerfully
240 Jones was asked he would like a position on the Bihar Committee, Jones asked what would
happen if he said no; they said he would get it whether he said yes or no; Jones accepted
245 being a bachelor there did not alter the way of living all that much; in general, those in
Jones position were encouraged not to get married within the first two years
250 there were always more officers than individual bungalows available; the typical way of
living there was to live as the paying guest of another family
254 one of Jones’s bachelor friends bought a bungalow and had a family come in and stay with
him and do his housekeeping
256 Jones began as an assistant commissioner and lived with his deputy commissioner, which
was very common
260 Jones once found a bungalow for himself, so he filled it with some of the younger officers
as paying guests
262 as a deputy commissioner, Jones found himself almost always having someone posted to
him under training who would live with him
265 one would move around, sometimes living in a club or bachelor’s quarters, sometimes
living as a friend of a family
266 living as a friend of a family made for very pleasant family relations
269 being a bachelor was not all bad, but it could get lonely in the those stations that were
farther out and more remote
271 not all wives took to moving around very well; relationships could be strained when wives
could not get along, especially with the Indians
277 where wives had good relations, things were much better and relations got along easier
280 Jones tells of the time when one woman was invited to join the Ladies Committee, but did
so in a slightly rude manner; the wife replied that she did not want to be a member and to
please remove her name
309 Jones talks of Kipling’s quote “. . . he travels the fastest who travels alone”
311 a bachelor means being free from any possible embarrassments, but there were many
positive points to having a wife
321 there were many Church of Scotland in India because the Scottish people tended to do that
rather than others
332 the government treasuries were so determined to not lose money that, if they had money to
pay to you, they insisted that you sign a receipt two days before; they had to sign a receipt
in order to receive their pay bill
339 one man, who had a guilty conscience, said that he could not sign the receipt because he
would be forging a false document; accountant general had to devise a special form for him
343 the people that came from England were typical university products; they were probably
followers of the Church of England
364 there were a number of Eurasians in the higher reaches of the provincial service, distinct

from the all Indian services; there were some in very high places in the ICS
369 there were some that were of a very high Indian father
377 Jones's friend had trained in the Cambridge Air Squadron as a pilot and tried very hard to
be released from the service to join the air force
383 the attitude was that it takes six months to train a pilot but it takes two and a half years to
train officers for the ICS
386 the friend and another pressed the issue with such insistency that they could go
394 Euro-Asians and the domicile Europeans were hard to distinguish between
396 if someone was brought up in India, it may have been as simple as their parents had settled
there; in settling there, they may have married someone with trace of Indian blood or not
400 a man like that could enter the provincial service, rarely the state services; the state services
tended to recruit in London or Delhi
408 socially, they had their own clubs
413 the European attitude in India was that the club was an association of private members and
they are entitled to choose the people they want to mix with
418 in a small station, it may so happen that the only tennis available is at the local club; the
local club may or may not have complete freedom between the races
423 there was a degree of uncertainty or danger of embarrassment to Indians, of which the
Europeans were not as conscious as they should have been
426 the United Service Club in Shimla made the requirement of being a member of the services
army; few Indians did get in because people were afraid they would be "black-balled"
431 the Punjab Club in Bihar was a residential club that Jones did stay at
433 when the war began, some became aware that the rules of admission of Indian guests was
no claim that Indians should be members; rules against admitting guests were outrageous
438 they could not invite the Prime Minister of the Punjab or a number of high ranking Indians
as guests
443 the suggestion was made to alter the rules; the immediate reaction to this was the threat of
immediate resignation; it was eventually accepted that they could be admitted as guests
454 the young officers were expected to pay a social call on various senior officers;
unfortunately, some of the senior officers lived in the Punjab Club and it was not easy to
get to the senior quarters
463 what eventually came out (although no one realized at the time) was that if one these
officers had turned up at the front door, a Gorkha watchman would say, "Blackman to the
other entrance"
470 Jones never found out about this until years later; he considers himself liberal with many
Indian friends, so he was embarrassed as well
480 this type of thing would occur without thinking
482 the friend that shared a flat with Jones was related to some of those that were high ranking
in the political world; a professional pianist came to stay with the friend and was playing at
a club that did not allow Indians to enter as guests; the friend could not go down and listen
to the concert
502 Jones tells of a friend's daughter that got married
514 Jones remembers his deputy commissioner pointing out a scene in *A Passage to India* in
which the girl plaintiff was put on the bench beside the district magistrate
521 the deputy commissioner said that could not have happened unless a telegram had gone to
the chief of the high court within twenty-four hours or else the case would be transferred
531 another scene entails the brother going into the club and everyone stands out of respect

- 547 the relationship gradually changed more and more; they were all a little out of date, but you
grew accustomed to a certain state of affairs
- 553 Jones was warned by someone before he first went out to not go out to India because “it’s
not what it used to be”
- 556 Jones also remembers a public works engineer saying that the very same thing happened to
him; he went to see an old retired engineer
- 560 end of Side A

Tape 873, Side B

Fairbairns (Part 2 of 3) (873.2)

- 001 from their point of view, this time was difficult; there were not any real dangers
- 003 Europeans could basically be safe walking down an alley with mugging going on along
each side, unless you interfered
- 004 Fairbairn’s friend found this out the hard way, as he was attempting to protect one of his
servants; he was murdered
- 007 you looked after your own self, your own office staff and servant staff as far as you could;
when they left the office, they were under their own protection and responsibility
- 010 there was a growth of anti-management feelings that developed
- 019 Fairbairn has said that, in the early days, there was not a great deal of “coming and going”
except among the more westernized Indians; this underwent a rapid change during the war
prior to Independence
- 024 the effects of war seem to put aside the social rules; there was a tremendous getting
together of the two communities, which was very fortunate
- 027 as Independence came along, there was tremendous merging between the British and
Indian capital and enterprise
- 030 by the time Fairbairn retired in 1956, clubs and especially business activity were the closest
with the Indian community; on the whole, the British/white/military community was much
happier and much more content
- 037 the Indians would sometimes tell the British “you’re not so bad”
- 040 the British business community was much happier after Independence when compared to
pre-Independence
- 043 they were happier because they were welcomed and knew where they stood
- 046 the British kept quiet for a year or two after India was handed over until they found their
footing again; then there seemed to be no hesitation to tell the Indian Civil Servants and
government what they thought
- 048 the Indian Civil Servants and government would also go to the British to see what they
thought; they were looking for help and advice in any respect
- 051 there was a large number of other European nationalities besides the English; many of
Fairbairn’s friends were from places like Boston
- 056 there were also Swedes, Swiss, Norwegians, Italians, Chinese tradesmen and such
- 060 it would be wrong to say they were fighting the case on behalf of the British; they were
fighting for those that had business with and in India
- 066 Mrs. Fairbairn felt sorry for the Anglo-Indian community; there still seemed to be a caste
system
- 068 if a child was born in India and had never been sent back home to be educated and such,
they were called “country”; they had an inferiority complex
- 069 there was a nice girl that was once asked what part of England she was from by a soldier;

she replied that she was from Wimbledon; the soldier replied that he was from England as well and the poor girl got all tangled up in the cover up; she was “country”
 079 the embarrassment from being “country” came mostly from educational differences; educational facilities only extended to a certain level
 080 a great many Europeans sent their families home to be educated because of the lack of upper levels in education
 084 those that were unable to send their family home for education were those fathers that had been in the army and decided to stay on, along with those that married into or those who were “country”
 093 those Anglo-Indians that were educated in India did not seem to “measure up” to those senior jobs in industry and business
 095 the Anglo-Indians were more useful in the various outdoor activities because they were so familiar with the area
 098 Eastern India must of have about 30,000 Europeans in the business and associated communities; the whole of India must have been twice that
 105 the Europeans were instrumental in getting the government of India to pass an act that applied to the European community; it was conscription
 109 they all wanted conscription because they could not get away otherwise; you could not go without organization
 115 all of the Europeans in India now are on short-term grievances; the men that are specialized in certain areas will go out for about two years to apply his knowledge and train the Indians in the particular technique
 123 this is largely the type of employment that is preserved mostly for Europeans/whites
 125 Mrs. Fairbairn went out in 1938; they were married in Bombay
 134 India is an interesting country, according to Mrs. Fairbairn, and she absolutely loved it; she could not believe her eyes the first time she saw a funeral procession
 140 they lived in Calcutta most of the time; they went up to the hill stations as well, which were a nice change
 143 there were communities of Americans living all around them; when the war began, the area became deserted because all the Americans had gone home and the British left as well
 146 Mrs. Fairbairn remembers that she could not get away because she was about to give birth to their second son; the eldest son only had one other little boy in the area to play with because everyone else had left
 149 Fairbairn says he is partly responsible for this because he made the judgment not to ship them off due to the dangers of the war and attack; one could ship their family way off somewhere else in the country because it was so enormous
 158 they remember the joy they felt when the American forces made their way into India
 167 the riots after the changing of administrations was terrible; Partition killings were far worse in the Punjab than in the eastern part of the country
 177 Mrs. Fairbairn was on the mobile canteen during the war, who took provisions to the various American and British troops
 183 the governor of Bengal’s wife wanted to go around with them one day and they were instructed not to let the troops know who she was
 195 they got stuck in a mud hole that had formed from the monsoon rains; the soldiers came and pulled them out, while complaining about women drivers
 204 after they got the van out and up to the gun site, the soldiers were told that the woman they were cursing was the governor’s wife

213 the governor's wife felt so bad that she rang up the other women that night to ensure they
 were all alright
 221 living in Calcutta was a very luxurious lifestyle; there were lovely houses
 223 the Fairbairns had the lower part of a house and then moved to the top, which had the better
 view; many of the houses were divided
 228 there would be a cook that required an assistant; there was the personal servant or "bearer";
 there would sometimes be a woman's servant; there would be a man in charge of the table,
 silverware, cutlery, etc.
 234 there was a man in charge of cleaning the house; there was one who was responsible for
 carrying water; there were also one or two gardeners
 238 the type of job went according to caste position; no one would do someone else's job
 264 religious principles are still very important
 271 Mrs. Fairbairn did not have a difficult time adapting to India; she loved it immediately and
 thought it to be a wonderful, interesting country
 274 she believed the Indians were a fine people; she would be infuriated when she saw them
 being treated unkindly or unfairly
 277 the language barrier made it difficult for one to get to know the "general run"
 281 Indian women are extremely shy; the Persian women were especially pretty because of
 their skin tone
 290 there is no one language in India; they had to learn Hindustani, which was slightly
 universal but did not do you any good if you were dealing with those people in Bengal
 296 the other languages could probably understand Hindustani, but all the languages were
 different
 297 English is still the universal and government language because one language would not
 understand the other, more or less look at it
 302 there was no one language
 303 they were encouraged to study the languages; many had to pass a lower and higher
 Hindustani examination, which applied very strictly to the civil services
 309 children seemed to pick up the languages very quickly because of the exposure to the
 servants; the Fairbairn's eldest son picked it up rather quickly
 317 there was a difference in the attitude of the two sons; they were more cautious with the first
 son while the second son played in the sun and gained such a tan that he resembled an
 Anglo-Indian
 320 while on the boat, the youngest son drew much attention from the men on the boat because
 of the way he looked and the Hindustani he spoke
 329 upon arriving home, the family wanted to hear him speak Hindustani; he knew then there
 was something wrong because no one else spoke it
 335 the son once locked himself in the bathroom and spoke Hindustani to himself
 338 when Fairbairn arrived home, his son came running up to him, yelling in Hindustani, "Here
 is someone who will understand me!"
 355 people in Calcutta did not wear topees, except for in the earlier days; people would sell
 them to you on the way out because they knew you did not know any better
 366 the troops would wear body shields all the way down their spine to keep the sun from
 beating on them
 368 heat strokes were more of a threat than sun strokes
 371 they would always wear a topi while playing golf in the earlier days to keep the sun off of
 them

372 the topi went out during the war and never came back; it was hard to wear it
378 [chummery?] is more of a British-Indian term; there were many American [chummeries?]
that would go out and have a drink with
384 it normally referred to a mess of bachelors; if a husband was alone, he would look to his
friends to join him to help with expenses
392 the staff also made life easier; they would take turns interviewing the cook and altering the
meals and such; cooks had a tough time
401 in the chummery, there may be men of different services; the different groups of Calcutta
mixed fairly freely
404 a lot of the mixing was done intentionally; it allowed for the men to discuss things that
would come up in their own business worlds and to learn
414 they ate their meals together; they would eat breakfast fairly early in the morning then go
off to their respective professions; they would not come home until the early evening and
then dine again together
423 as bachelors, they would have “guest evening”
431 the mess president would not be an official posting, but everyone took turns serving as the
president; the duties included paying the cook, financing the organization and recovered
from the others’ share
438 they typically ate a European-style meal; they would go out and have dinner with friends
443 they would eat a lot of curries, particularly at lunch on the weekends
453 the European dishes were passed down from generation to generation; the cooks would not
have to be taught the dishes, unless someone wanted something new
465 it was very easy from the bachelor’s point of view; the women would normally supervise
over the delicacies and such, like a soufflé
469 they ate well and the cooks were marvelous; “no complaints”
472 wines were difficult to keep, were kept more in the clubs than in the domestic homes
480 there were no refrigerators, only ice boxes; the iceman would arrive with large chunks of
ice that would be put in the icebox; you would normally keep cold drinks in there
488 after refrigeration, wines were easier to keep
490 there were large numbers of European goods in Calcutta; it was a big community
convention, sometimes having strawberries and oysters
528 Mrs. Fairbairn and their sons went out to India, after being at home, for holiday before
Fairbairn retired; it was the first time the sons had been back to India since they were small
537 [Alistair?] (the eldest son) is in a business firm that goes out to India, but Fairbairn does not
think his sons are that interested in India
543 they would never be stationed out there, but the Fairbairns would like to go back for a visit
566 end of Side B