

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

**Tape 858 Finding Aid**

**INTERVIEWEE NAMES:**

John Shattock

4700.0583 Tape 858.1 (Tape 4 of 4)

Major General R.C.A. Edge and Mrs. Patricia Edge

4700.0586 Tape 858.2 (Tape 2 of 3)

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

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

**SERIES:** British Voices from South Asia

**INTERVIEW DATES:**

Shattock: 3/30/1978

Edges: 3/31/1978

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

Shattock: 47 minutes

Edges 47 minutes

**OTHER MATERIALS:** None

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**Tape 858, Side A**

**Shattock (Part 4 of 4) (858.1)**

- 001 grass widowers had white on their capes while bachelors had red
- 005 a grass widower was a man whose wife was back in England on leave looking after the children
- 006 (looking at a picture) the brigadier [?] was a white heart; the governor of the Punjab was the Grand Master, designated by a chain and was a widower; talk about the other people in the photographs
- 032 talk about some friends that are involved in a special called "Recollections in India"
- 040 discuss a book about being in India, but no one knows who wrote it

055 talks about Penderel Moon and a man named Archer; they were orthodox in manner, but  
not in what was done

066 in certain cases in small stations, due to inadequate company, you would develop eccentric  
solitude, excessive drinking; in the old days, sex with the Indians was natural when there  
was no other outlet

081 Archer was a straight-forward ICS officer; took terrific interest in the people he worked  
with; this was eccentricity in a good way rather than the weird sort

089 the amusing and entertaining type people were more in the pioneering days; in his day, the  
people were living a more straight-forward life, looking forward to the time they were  
going to leave and there wasn't any room for pioneering adventures

094 you received tremendous enthusiasm for drinking out of wells and climbing up mountains;  
there was enormous enthusiasm out of the Indian army for their men, which developed  
eccentricity in some ways

098 if you were going to make a complaint about the English in India in his day, it would be that  
too many of them were too dull

103 people did talk and tell stories in the club; the men had their own desert stories, but the  
telling of them has died out now; men sitting around after dinner and telling stories does  
not seem to happen anymore

118 there was a very small minority of people that were not active in sports and physical  
activities; it was something to do and people knew it was the right thing to do in order to  
keep up their health; some simply enjoyed it

125 a large number of people would go horseback riding in the morning before breakfast and  
before work

129 he did a large amount of shooting; in Kashmir, the shooting was outstanding; [*shikar?*] was  
Indian for shooting and was always talked about; people would go to Kashmir just for the  
shooting

134 you would shoot during the cold weather in the plains; in Kashmir, he would go out in the  
evenings on his bicycle to shoot the flying ducks as the sun was setting

141 had a [*shikare?*], which was someone who looked after your shoot and recommended  
where to go

143 as the sun would set, a wonderful sunset and glow would emerge from between the  
mountains, which were surrounding him;

153 would hunt about three times a week during the winter; maybe once a week, he would go  
out and shoot a mountain partridge, which was the most wonderful eating he has ever had

160 big game was a great subject; he didn't do much big game shooting, only killed one panther

168 he was not a good shot, but he enjoyed it anyway; the best times were in Kashmir

170 as time went on, they began to discuss politics a good bit; the problem of settling the Indian  
question went on for years before it finally ended; there was a lot of talk in Delhi about it,  
but not so much in an out station

174 in any station, the question was also what to do after everything ended

179 they all were concerned about what they were going to do after India; some felt especially  
vulnerable because they were older, the most vulnerable were from age 45 to 55

187 he found it difficult to adjust to England after coming back from India; after a year or two,  
he realized that he did not want to retire anywhere else and that England was where he  
wanted to be

202 it was remarkable how women, who had been used to servants cooking and cleaning,

would turn into great housewives; everyone felt a difficulty in readjusting, but they all managed in the long run

211 the day of Gandhi's assassination was the most dramatic event in his life; Gandhi spent the last six months of his life staying with multi-millionaire industrialists; Gandhi refused to return to Old Delhi [?] until the Sikhs would allow him to open his services from Christian hymns

240 Shattock once went to one of Gandhi's prayer meetings and heard him pose the question: "Have we gained independence from the British to turn the Taj Mahal into a Hindu hotel? Is that what we won independence for?"

251 two months later, Gandhi would fast unto death until the Sikhs evacuated the Mosques in Old Delhi, which they had invaded; his health got extremely bad; eventually, he would break his fast

267 throughout this time, Gandhi had very few visitors; majority of visitors were the poor Muslims who lived around Delhi

274 around the third week of January, an there was an enormous explosion; bombs had gone off in the gardens where Gandhi was giving a prayer meeting; no one was hurt, so security was increased

289 a week later, a security guard comes rushing in again, saying Gandhi had been shot and killed; noticed that there had been no proper security arrangements made, never mind his increase in popularity and the bomb attack the previous week

296 felt the cold shivers when an Indian air force officer told him a Muslim had assassinated Gandhi and remembered thinking that millions of Muslims would be massacred that night; remembered the relief he felt when he learned it wasn't a Muslim

311 around nine o'clock they began murdering Muslims in Bombay; had to make an emergency radio broadcast saying it was a Hindu who had done it

319 remembers seeing people not knowing how to deal with the situation and the death

322 the deputy prime minister was sitting in the corner; he had an argument with Gandhi an hour before about dividing up assets between India and Pakistan; he never moved for half an hour

331 a couple of hours later, huge crowds gathered; Pandit Nehru went to address the crowds, but broke down half a dozen times before he could begin to speak; it was moving to see such a great Indian leader falling to pieces

341 there are three things he remembers most that day: Pandit Nehru in an awful state, Lord Mountbatten trying to console everyone, and the deputy prime minister looking very sinister in the corner

354 it was funny that the strongest man in India had lived through so much carnage, but was completely broken down by extreme right-wing party Hindus

365 it was tense times; looking back, he's thankful his life has been full of events, but at the time it was not easy

371 the British community in India was a close-knit community in the general stations or districts; they were a solid middle class, at least in the services; when you got to the more technical people and lower grades, they would come together in times of need, crisis or trouble

393 believes English did and did not feel overwhelmed by being a small minority group in India; did not because they felt they were doing an excellent job with so few people and had been able to keep the situation under control for so long; more faint hearted people, and

when there was real trouble, felt apprehensive, especially when a crowd was wild  
 412 saw communal pillage in New Delhi; he was never involved in giving orders to religious  
 crowds; British kept out of the way  
 425 exceptionally few Europeans in India; the poor whites were the Anglo-Indians; the British  
 went to India to do their service, earn their living and then retire to England with few  
 exceptions when their time was up  
 455 charities would have sent the poor back to England if there was any; he cannot recall any  
 however  
 458 interesting social characteristic between the British and Dutch is if a British married an  
 Anglo-Indian, his status with the British would go down; if the Dutch married an  
 Dutch-Indonesian, her status would go up and his would remain in the same place  
 484 Dutch were complete contrast to British; British would question why a man would become  
 involved with that type of woman  
 501 when Indians married British women, or the rare occasion when British men married  
 Indian women, that caused no change in status on the British side; when the Indian was a  
 man, it did not make a difference; they were rare cases and those cases were from highly  
 sophisticated Indian families and were content with the settlement  
 514 when a British soldier came and married a low class Indian, that was unsatisfactory  
 because the Britisher didn't like the standard of living there and the girl got dissatisfied  
 with the husband not being satisfied with her home  
 521 when it dealt with middle class families, there was no change in status  
 523 there were cases of old families domiciled in India that were completely British; as  
 independence drew closer, when they reached retirement age, they did not settle in India  
 and gradually made their way back to England  
 545 they had a narrower upbringing, but not a lower status  
 550 there was the sub-divisional officer of a subdivision of a district, then the district magistrate  
 on top of all the subdivisions, then the commissioner was on top of all the districts in his  
 division  
 562 the commissioner of the district Shattock was working in was a domicile European; he was  
 not an ICS officer, but had been in the provincial service and had been promoted; his  
 attitude was narrower because he did not like what Shattock was doing about the club; he  
 retired and went to England  
 605 end of Side A

### **Tape 858, Side B**

#### **Edges (Part 2 of 3) (858.2)**

002 if you served abroad, the country you served in tends to produce a sense of unity with  
 others that have served there, even if you could not stand the sight of them when you were  
 out there  
 012 one of his fellow officers had never met his wife before they were married; they came from  
 two orthodox Sikh families and were not allowed to see each other until they were actually  
 married; she cheated because she peaked over the curtain  
 016 when the officer retired, he became a farmer in the Punjab and had five daughters; this was  
 a disaster because they all had to have dowries; one of his daughters studied farming in  
 American mid-west

- 033 from the early years in India, Edge remembers his father being stationed in Arrah in Bihar; it was one of the places in the mutiny; they spent a lot of time at camp because his father was always touring
- 048 his father was responsible for some of the earliest coal mines in India and Bihar; remembers watching them being operated; remembered it as inhumane way to treat women but it was the normal thing
- 054 women took their fair share of hard, manual labor, maybe more; in 1968, they were repairing the runway in Delhi and he noticed that it was mainly women doing the work still carrying baskets on their heads
- 063 the nanny came out with Edge and his brother to India in 1912; she remained with the family until 1920, when they returned home; nanny came out of retirement to help his mother when she had a stroke
- 079 it was fairly common for the Anglo-Indians to have nannies
- 080 there was a good number of servants; there was a bearer, who was the head servant; there was the assistant to the bearer; one or two servants that cleaned up; there was a cook and assistant cook; one or two sweepers; there was a [dobie?]; at least two gardens; at least one to look after the horses; there was driver for his father's car
- 104 you tended to have your own personal servants, rather than sharing with neighbors because it was a way on ensuring that things remained hygienic
- 106 they had their own car; they had their own milk cow, named Buttercup, and a servant to milk it
- 108 the cow would only let the servant or his mother to milk her, so when the servant got smallpox, his mother had to milk the cow
- 114 the servants lived in [godowns?], which were separated from the house; the kitchen area that the cook was in was also separated; look at a drawing of the outline; everyone had his/her own bedroom
- 131 servants would remain in their own personal room, never in the dining room
- 133 they happened to have a pump house to pump water
- 140 the whole house was designed to be well-ventilated; the important part is getting shade and preventing the sun from coming straight through the windows; now they don't do that because most of them have air conditioning
- 143 Edge had one brother and two sisters
- 145 sweeper had to have his own entrance because everything had to be carried away
- 147 father built a flower bed to avoid drivers driving in the graveled area around their room; put steps up to allow people to get into the house
- 157 remembers this house best because he was older than the others; they lived there from 1916 until 1920
- 165 the bungalow wasn't very old; it was probably built in 1900 he guesses; the very old ones were built in a different style (shows picture)
- 186 in many ways, your servants were your best friends because you saw more of them than anyone else; one became very fond of one's servants because they became attached to the children; still get letters from their last living servant
- 195 at the time of Partition (1947), many lives were lost in the Punjab; for instance, their cook wanted to get back to Pakistan were they were, but they told him it wasn't safe to travel; on the cook's train, all the men were killed, with the women and children left to starve to death; they never found the cook

207 Edge's wife is first generation; she went out to India because she married Edge  
 210 they were supposed to get married in England, but because someone got sick, Edge was  
 posted to take his place and couldn't have his leave  
 216 discuss latest letter from their old servant; the servant gets other people to write the letters  
 for him so they are funny at times  
 240 his wife always wanted to go to India; came home at the end of the war for four months and  
 then went back out  
 245 never read up on India before she went out; she had heard a lot about India, especially the  
 places with very strong Indian traditions  
 261 many people ask Edge to help them get a job in England  
 268 finished training in 1935; went out in January of 1936  
 276 have a collection of letters; joke about how hard it is to avoid collecting things  
 289 entered the Royal Engineers with the expectations of going back to India; sappers were the  
 best paid area in the army; his father was an engineer, and all of his mother's family was  
 soldiers; thought Royal Engineers was a good compromise between all of them  
 298 sappers played an important role in the running of India because they ran the service parts,  
 like the public works; they had their own special place in India  
 304 didn't really do any research before his return to India; practically everyone in the army  
 had served in India, so the army was full of people telling you what to do  
 313 wife gotten bitten by mad dog twice; one instance was when she was eight and a half  
 months pregnant; she had to have injections for fourteen days; occurred when the woman  
 she was sharing a house with had picked up a puppy that had developed rabies  
 354 you did not have much preparation before going out to India, but you had met many people  
 who had been out and you absorbed their knowledge; as a tradition, you would always buy  
 your topi at a little shop on the port side of the troop ship; as you left port side on the way  
 home, everyone would throw their topees into the Mediterranean  
 373 the war messed up their return; his wife had to fly back because she got stuck in India due  
 to the war  
 383 they didn't have Christmas together for a long time due to the war; two months after the  
 end of the war and being in their new station, his wife was granted voyage home and she  
 had to take it; if she hadn't taken the opportunity, she may have had to wait for another five  
 years  
 413 the theory was that you had to send the children back to England when they were about  
 seven or eight years old; most families had to face the decision of staying with the family in  
 India or sending the family home to England for school; you were either parentless in  
 England, or family-less in India  
 427 his oldest sister was left at home in 1912; both sisters went home in 1918; his father had to  
 decide to either stay in India for another four or five years for a larger pension or to go  
 home with his family; he chose to go home  
 442 it was difficult to get a good education in India; once a girl reached her teens, certain  
 hazards began to present themselves but they were rarely there  
 462 some families had governesses, but it was not very satisfactory  
 466 having to send the children home was an unsatisfactory feature of life in India; it may have  
 created some tension, although they never really felt it that much; some would keep their  
 children longer than others  
 475 the children had to go home sometime, and it was much more difficult on them if they

entered their education careers much older than their peers  
479 in England, people that could afford it would send their children to a boarding school; it has  
been considered the right thing for boys at least  
498 a prep school in England goes up until around age thirteen or fourteen; then you would go  
to the public school, which was really a private school, if you were not in the state  
educational system; you would stay until you were seventeen or eighteen, then you were  
off to the university  
513 it was awkward if you came back from India if you came back at a different age, because  
you began prep school when you were about eight or nine; you tried to arrange sending  
children home with the ages in the educational system  
527 when his children were first sent back, William was three and Mary was six; looking back,  
it is not good psychologically for the children to be abandoned at such a young age  
560 William went out again, and says he can remember some things; Mary doesn't remember  
anything  
585 Arzt[?] was the standard place to buy your tropical clothes if you hadn't bought them  
already  
600 remembers nearly sinking in a monsoon in the Bay of Bengal  
610 end of tape