INTERVIEWEES:
Major Christopher York 4700.0596 Tape 875.1 (Tape 2 of 3)
Sir Charles Dalton and Lady Daphne Dalton 4700.0597 Tape 875.2 (Tape 1 of 4)

IDENTIFICATION:  Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWERS:  Frank de Caro and Rosan Jordan

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Daltons: 4/27/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 34 minutes
York: 47 minutes
Daltons: 47 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS:  None

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Tape 875, Side A
York (Part 2 of 3) (875.1)
002 they would ride without saddles for two hours
005 after breakfast, a newly trained officer would then have drill; you would learn foot drills, sword drills
007 sword drills were very exhausting because you were on your feet with your knees bent, mimicking the position of sitting on a horse; this would be done in temperatures that would be about 120° in the shade in the summer
011 the afternoons were luxurious; they tended to finish around one o’clock
013 there was a nap that normally followed lunch; they did not get up until four in the afternoon
015 at four, they would go and play polo, either on troop horses or your own pony; York believes it is the best ball game of all
019 York could not afford to hunt and play polo when he returned home, so he never became very good at it
there would then be a period of troop training, then a period of squadron training and finally regimental training in the last period

at this stage, you would be prepared for brigade maneuvers; York explains brigade maneuvers

they took place in what would be considered “parched jungle”

if the enemy was to penetrate your guard and frighten the horses, there would be an awful stampede; horse pegs would come up and the horses would be freed; York does not remember that happening to them, but it easily could

one of the reservoirs was covered with flamingos; it was gorgeous when they went to get out of the water together

brigade maneuvers were fun because they could maneuver as you would because all the regiments in India were up to war strength

the routine of life after polo would probably be to go down to the club; York talks of one swimming bath that was warm

at the club, they would drink gin and lime, called a gimlet; you would also have dinner there or play billiards

while having dinner or playing billiards, the punkers would be going

a punker was a large screen on a swivel that rotates backwards and forwards, like a great flap; this would keep the air moving

the punkerwalla was the one who pulled the string to keep the punker going

in the officer’s mess and in the barracks, there were electric fans; York does not remember any form of punkers in the officer’s mess or troop barrack room

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you would get up before dawn and shoot all morning (for it was too hot in the afternoon)
the reservoirs were known as “tanks”; they could be fifty acres or more
York remembers shooting snipe; you would walk along the edge in line, sometimes falling
into an elephant foot mark; falling into the mark could upset you seriously because you
would fall head first into the water
it was a bit annoying because your gun would get wet, along with your cartridges
they would also shoot big game, although York did not like it very much; panthers and
tigers were the main targets
you would go off on courses; York would go to [Pachmurrie?], which was a small arms
course
young officers were put through it all to make them instructors in small arms; there would
be examinations at the halfway mark and at the end
the staff sergeant of York’s squad was a sterling character; they would get him to go up to
the bungalows in the evening and help them “polish off” the requisite skills they may need
there was a brewery there that brewed green beer; the men thought it was disgusting; they
kept it all for when the sergeant would come and give them extra instruction
he “lapped it up in great quantities”
there were parties at the government house, at the officer’s club and in various married
persons bungalows
there was a lot of social life
York tells of the trip they made in cars, piled high with bedding and such; they had to put
the cars on a train to “leap frog” two rivers
there were places all over India that were surrounded by beautiful scenes
the journey back was way more adventurous; the local headman near the first river called
up thirty or so villagers, who attached ropes to the cars and pulled them across; at the
second river, they had to call for thirty more men because the sand was soft
they had to spend the night on the bank after they made it across; they had water drawn up
from a well and drank it without having boiled it; York believes it was here that he
contracted amoebic dysentery
once they returned to the barracks, they realized it took them an extra day to it by car than
to do it partly by train; they had not asked for the leave to cover the lag
they could not have a weekend leave for one month
in an officer’s mess, at every meal, your bearer stood behind your chair; this happened to
every officer; if someone came to dinner, he would bring his footman
the life of a British regiment was different from that of an Indian regiment; York did not get
know the Indian regiments well, though he knew the officers
the real difference was that the Indian regiments had a two sets of officers: the British
officers were few and a warrant officer class I plus, who was not quite an officer but not
quite an NCO
there was enormous competition to get into any Indian regiment or battalion
you would literally put your son’s name down at birth to become a private soldier; you may
also need to have some pull; this was all done by the Indians
an Indian regiment was known for the loyalty and obedience amongst the soldiers; the
soldiers are still marvelous, what is left of them at least
the Indian army is still being run the same way today as it was then
York’s neighbor was in one of the cavalry regiments; he was asked to go back out to India
for some celebration; they met him off the boat and went up by train; he had a marvelous
time maneuvering, wining and dining with the regiment
every night they would sit down to dinner just as they did in the British days; everything
was almost exactly as it was in the old days
they were also completely un-political, although now the generals seem to be getting more
political
a British regiment would have a lot of officers; there were between thirty-two and
thirty-five total
it was much larger in England; in those days, a cavalry regiment, like the infantry battalion,
marched in fours and their weapons was a rifle and sword; there was also a machine gun
squadron
as newly joined officers, you had to learn to shoe horses; it was “a jolly hot job”
they learned how to make the shoes; then had to prepare the horse’s foot and fit the shoe
this craft was learned in a temperature of about 120°
York once received six months sick leave
there were several leaves; during the hot period of the year, there was a rest camp at a hill
station
one squadron at a time would go up to the hill station, which was called Wellington; higher
up the hill, the governor of Madras could be found during the summer months
there was an officer’s club where officer’s on leave would stay; York was lucky because he
was put in charge of the regimental stable for two years, which was there for hunting
the hounds hunted jackals over the rolling hills
the hills were full of grazing grass for bullocks
between the hills was a bog
you would find a jackal in one of the woods, which had been specially picked
unless you knew the country well and were familiar with the crossings, you would always
become bogged down when trying to get across
this was a lot of fun as well
York would hunt four days a week during leave while in charge of the stables
there would normally be a party at night
there was fishing for the days you did not hunt; there were some very good rivers in the hill;
some were known specially for their trout
you had to be careful of sun radiation; a tough planter who lived there would have adapted,
but York had not
York fished in shorts one day and then had to stay in bed for three; he had a terrible sunburn
on his knees
it was still exciting going there
you would motor to a certain spot and then there was some country with no roads or
bridges; you would put your car on a train and you would get into a sleeper until you
reached the military station
at the military station, there would be rest houses, messes and such; you would rest there
and then motor on
you would drive past and through mountain blocks until you reached a beautiful rolling hill
country, which was wet and misty
they would stay there during the leave, which was about four weeks; they were very
generous when granting leave in those days
the Nizam had his own army, which was mostly the nobles of the state; the only thing York
remembers about them is that they could not trust themselves not to cheat
a British officer and a British NCO would have to watch every shot during such things as shooting tournaments; they were looking to see that no one touched the target until they saw the shot. They would examine the shot and then telephone back to their British counterpart on the firing line.

The Nizam officers would play polo with York and others, but York does not remember them participating in maneuvers. They were mostly Muhammadans and did not drink; they were never invited to drink parties. There were always funny restrictions.

York’s regiment did not stay at a permanent location; you would go out for two years and then serve four or five years in India, and then return to a home posting. York received his home posting about 1936; he was later forced to leave the army because of stomach troubles, but stayed on supplementary reserves. York would go and receive three weeks’ worth of training when the troops would come home (but what he really means is that he had three weeks’ worth of fun with them).

Life was restricted because there were no women; the men would “chase” the native women, but they were basically not allowed outside the compound (unless they were married). If you were to get into trouble, most times it would be with a married woman; it normally was not the married woman’s fault.

The single men lived in barracks; the barracks were nice facilities, as far as barracks go. There was not much town life; they did go shopping, but it was difficult to go out to a night club or such.

A “naafi” was a canteen where you could buy things; stands for: Navy, Army and Air Force Institution.

Other members on board once had to throw a man into his bunk and leave him there because he became so intoxicated on the way out. If you decided to join the army, you went where you were told. If you wished or were very poor, you would normally try to get into the Indian army because expenses were less and wars were more expensive; you did not need so much money in the Indian army. You had to do well at Sandhurst in order to be considered for the Indian army; unless you were in the top twenty, you probably did not make it into the Indian army.

The cavalry thought they were a cut above everyone else because they rode and did not have to walk; it was always more desirable to ride than to walk. The cavalry tended to do things much faster; the majority of people that got into cavalry regiments had been hunting as boys and were naturally more inclined to want to soldier with a horse.

There were a large number of cavalry regiment officers that were the sons of the local land owners; this was a wonderful way to get your sons trained. At Hyderabad, the political situation was that the Indian government provided a resident, who was a political advisor, to the Nizam; he was also a servant to the Indian government. The Nizam had to follow the directions of the resident. One particular resident lived in a nice house with two daughters; every Christmas, as a gift, he would give the Nizam a fortnight’s holiday in one of the guest houses.

York was selected as one of those able to go on the trip. They had to wait at the train station until the resident and his family arrived; they then...
boarded the train in order of seniority

529 they would stay in the sitting car, drinking and talking, until dinner; just before dinner time, the train would pull up to a station, and they would walk on the platform to the dining car

536 they may have stopped in order to enter the bedding cars, York is not completely clear

541 dinner was a six course meal; the resident would then announce that it was time for bed

549 they would leave the resident’s car and walk down to the sleepers; this would then happen in the morning, when they would go to breakfast in the royal car

555 at the first stop, the train stopped directly in front on the red carpet; they had not finished breakfast

565 end of Side A

Tape 875, Side B
Daltons (Part 2 of 5) (875.2)

007 they originally went out together because Dalton was posted for a six year tour of duty; Lady Dalton had previously been out to India with her family

012 Sir Charles and Lady Dalton were in India together for eight and a half years

013 Dalton had never been out to India before; Lady Dalton had seen more of the different parts because her family was out on the frontier

016 Lady Dalton’s stepfather was an official of the state; she was born in India in 1910, going home when she was four

020 they went out by boat to Bombay; then traveled by train to the capital of the Northwest Frontier; they from there to [Kishar?] by car

027 there was a brigade of infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment; her father had been on leave, which was about six months “every now and then” as an Indian army officer

035 her family lived in an old bungalow with mud floors and walls; you had normal English furniture

043 the furniture was all hired; you would take your own small things, like china, silver, pictures, etc.

047 the furniture was hired for you

051 their family bungalow was quite large, having two double bedrooms, dressing rooms, bathrooms and such; there was a large sitting room, followed by a smaller bedroom; the kitchen was in the back and separated from everything else

055 there were wide verandas that were used to keep the house cool in the summer months; the heat was about 120°

058 in the winter, the climate was beautiful; it was cold, with ice and snow

059 you wore ordinary English clothes, just as those you would wear in England; in those days, you would wear a topi all the time while you were outdoors because of the powerful sun

062 since World War II, topees started to be considered stupid; no one wears topees any more

065 the ideas concerning necessities have changed completely; you would wear too many clothes and begin suffering from heat strokes

068 during the war in Burma, you wore shirts and bust hats; you were also made to drink a lot

073 the daughter of an official was kidnaped from her bungalow, the same bungalow Lady Dalton’s step-father later lived in; the tribe that kidnaped the daughter killed the wife/mother

081 the tribe kept the girl for some time; a missionary went with a small expedition to track down the girl and get her back; they eventually got her back unharmed

089 the bungalow they lived in; it was creepy
one would never hear the servant come in and stand behind your chair; this was partly because of the flooring and the fact that the servants did not wear shoes
the walls were very thick, deadening any sound
it was a creepy bungalow; it was the fact that there was basically no sounds that made it eerie; the rooms were very dark and there were very few windows
they would go into the “nearest big place”, but only with an escort; the unrest on the Frontier prevented one from going out unattended
you were escorted by a younger officer or by a male family figure that was in the military; Lady Dalton would sometimes be escorted by her step-father, who would carry a gun
there was a pack of hounds that were looked after by one of the regiments; they were “drag hounds”, running after scents laid by people instead of animals
it is an artificial way of hunting without killing game
they would hunt jackal in [Bishar?]; it was very fun
you would meet early in the morning, just as the sun was rising; it would be extremely cold in the winter mornings, gradually warming throughout the day
Dalton was struck by the temper of life; one had to get up at around five or six in the morning, getting most of the out-of-doors work done by ten
by ten in the morning, it was too hot to be outside and work; the afternoon would be spent napping and such until the evening, when you “came to life again”
you went to the club, or whichever game you were going to play, in the evenings; the games were preferably energetic in order to keep fit
you would then have drinks in the evening
it was a bizarre change from the normal routine; it was an attractive life, provided you could grow accustomed to getting up so early in the morning
the morning was really the best time of day because it was so cool and wonderful air in northern India; there would be very cold nights as well
Lady Dalton talks of a type of skin that was worn in India by both men and women
there was an extraordinary feeling before the monsoons broke; the warm weather would cause many to become bad-tempered and irritable, until you could smell the rain on the wind
in a matter of a few days, the area around the bungalow would go from dry and dusty to having animals grazing on it
for about six weeks to two months after the rains, life would then be very pleasant; there would then be the gradual warming again
they would go out onto the countryside to shoot snipe and duck; they talk of other game they would sometimes hunt
the cobras would come out of the ground with the rain; Dalton never had many run-ins with the snakes, and people were rarely bitten
there was one incident in Delhi, where there was a krait between the bedroom and Lady Dalton; she eventually screamed for help enough to make the snake leave
the snakes would come in from the drain holes in the floor of the bathroom; one was always told to look out for snakes being curled around the light switches on the veranda
there were also scorpions and praying mantis to be cautious of; geckoes were useful in catching flies and such
a scorpion bite is very nasty and could be deadly, although not many actually died from it; they tended to get into ones slippers or shoes
the Dalton’s once had a mongoose to protect from snakes; they would go after a snake
there were also bungalows that had sheets to fit between the roof and the room; one could almost always see something crawling between the sheet and the ceiling; the sheet kept the “creep crawlers” from dropping onto the floor

there were miniature gray striped squirrels, called tree rats; they were beautiful to look at by a nuisance

Dalton left the army headquarters in Delhi in 1942 to take on a more active, fighting role; the family went down to the hills

there was an incident there involving a mad dog

rabies was very prevalent, so the Dalton’s normally refrained from keeping small animals

the rabies would be brought into the area by wild jackals that would go into the house dust pans, scavenging for food

while in the hills, Lady Dalton got a small terrier for the children; one day, while in the garden, Lady Dalton saw a mad dog come into their garden

the puppy saw the dog and ran after it; Lady Dalton caught the puppy after a while and gave it to one of her sons to have it destroyed

Lady Dalton then had to have anti-rabies injections because of her involvement; at the time, it was a series of fourteen shots; Lady Dalton only received seven because she had not been bitten

not very many kept pets because of this problem; the Indian dogs that were seen throughout were more like scavengers and unnecessary, but not a nuisance

all the dogs in the village would begin barking as soon as one person would move; it was nearly an hour before they would calm down again

there were also panthers and jackals that would come extremely close; they never really did much though

the Dalton’s once went down for a tiger shoot during Christmas; they did not get a tiger, however

many of the English would go away with their families, especially during Christmas, and reserve an area of jungle and rest house; it was a nice get away; the days would be spent looking at the different wildlife and such throughout the local jungle

there was also a professional hunter there to advise you; if he had information about a tiger or panther whereabouts, you would then go and sit up at night in a tree

you would be situated over a piece of bait and waited; it was exciting whether you got a shot or not; it required complete stillness

one of the things Dalton feels they missed out on was the interaction with the Indians, except for the servants; they met one or two princes, but that was only after moving to the top level

the army and civil service were miles apart; Dalton is sure this is wrong and given the chance to do it again, one would go and get to know the Indians

Lady Dalton’s experience was different because of her step-father, who commanded an Indian regiment; there was a lot of social contact with the Indian officers and their wives

the wives were never seen uncovered in those days; Lady Dalton’s mother would entertain the officer’s wives to tea; they would all arrive covered and then removed them as soon as there was no man present

you managed to get around the language barriers with those that did not speak English

the language spoken to the servants was not the same as that used for the higher classes; this gave Lady Dalton a little trouble
466 the women were very beautiful; fair skinned and blue eyes
472 interaction was on a narrow front because it was only with the regiment; there was no
contact with civilians, except when in the Indian states
476 Lady Dalton’s step-father was given the posting as Advisor to the State Forces after
leaving his commanding post; it was here that the family lived in a true Indian environment
489 the Indians were extremely hospitable
492 Hyderabad was a state given to Muhammadan princes; they lived in considerable states and
very well educated
501 you went to these houses to play tennis, have dinner and such; you met many industry
Indians this way, as well as doctors and such
514 the Nizam had the reputation of being the richest man, as well as very mean; he lived very
simply, never having a proper domestic arrangements
531 the meals were served by servants that were not dressed as grand as most of the other
servants would normally be
539 he sits in the middle of the long table, instead of the end; if the wine went along more than
twice, he would remove it and you were allowed any more
552 there was an enormous hiring, about three hundred; they were not allowed to come to
dinner; after the ladies retired into the drawing, three of the daughters would be produced
to mingle
565 the women would have pity for the girls because they were so badly dressed
577 end of tape