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Tape 877 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:
Sir Charles Dalton and Lady Daphne Dalton
4700.0597   Tape 877.1   (Tape 3 of 4)
Sir Charles Dalton, Brigadier and Mrs. Herbert Dinwiddie
4700.0598   Tape 877.2   (Tape 1 of 2)

IDENTIFICATION:  Britons in Pre-Independence India

INTERVIEWER:   Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan

SERIES:   British Voices from South Asia

INTERVIEW DATES:
Daltons:  4/27/1978
Dalton and Dinwiddies: 4/27/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 33 minutes
Daltons: 47 minutes
Dalton and Dinwiddies: 46 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS:   None

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INDEX

Tape 877, Side A
Daltons (Part 4 of 5) (877.1)
001 three weeks on the boat with the same people was pretty boring; you went into Port Sudan
in the Red Sea
004 Lady Dalton passed out once arriving at the port because it was so hot; she only passed out
for a moment
008 there were very few unmarried girls when compared to the number of men in India
013 a young girl had a very social life because of all the available men
015 you would meet many people and asked to stay at various homes for a house party; girls
would also go out riding, play polo, or dancing
018 a regiment would be the particular host in the cantonment and set up the entertainment
021 there was one week were Lady Dalton attended a progressive dinner, in which the different
courses were served in different houses throughout the cantonment
you had to get from one house to the next as best you could
it was good, light-hearted fun
there were the governors who would hold house parties for various functions; there would be dances or maybe shooting
there was a very active social life that was great fun, according to Lady Dalton
your skills as a rider would also produce many extras in sport, such as riding for others or in a show or to go out hunting
shooting was great fun on the weekends
the electric fans could not keep up with the extreme heat of the daytime
the back doors would be opened; there were two grass screens that acted as a blind
a boy was then paid to sit on the veranda and splash water on the screens; the wind would blow threw the screens and cool the house
during the hottest part of the day, the room would suddenly get terribly hot and stuffy; it was then you realized that the boy had run off or fallen asleep
it would emit a pleasant smell, like that of hay; it would also cool the rooms
when the Dalton’s first went out to India, the fans were hand operated, known as punkers; the boy who worked the fans was called the punkerwalla
he would pull a rope attached to a curtain that was the width of the room and made of cloth; all houses had this
the sand flies were an irritating bug that was hard to see; there were special sand fly nets over the beds, instead of mosquito netting, because the mesh was smaller
in spite of being tucked in all around, they would still sometimes get in and “devour you”
Lady Dalton once had to go in cotton gloves and socks to keep from scratching all of the bites she had suffered
some were more vulnerable to being bitten than others; sand fly fever is a recognized illness caused by sand fly bites
sand fly fever is not terribly serious, running a high temperature for a few days
you could see the mosquitoes and, therefore, kill them
mosquito control is much better in India than in Dalton’s day; they now concentrate on the breeding grounds
during the war, there were pills that would be taken to help ward off mosquitoes and help the body resist malaria if you were bitten
the British and Indian forces had more casualties caused by disease than by enemy fire in Burma
the disease was mostly malaria
there was an internal drill, the tablets, and an external drill, by never appearing in shorts after nightfall
in order to get the soldiers to take the pills, the soldiers were lined up and given the pill every morning
the Japanese put a story out into the Indian army that the pills made the men impotent; the rumor spread like wildfire
this was a potent weapon because the men would refuse to take the pill; although people knew, there was nothing they could do
the way to get over this was when the time came for leave; when the soldier would return three or four months later, he would learn that the rumor was not true
Dalton believes there is a lot less malaria now
there were a number of regiments, mainly field artillery but others as well
at the head in Delhi, there was a Major General Royal Artillery who was one of the staff members of the Commander and Chief of Army Headquarters. They were divided into commands: Eastern Command, Western Command, etc.; at each command, there was a brigadier who was responsible for the soldiers in his area. The units would rotate every so often; the same men were not in it all the time because the British soldiers were only supposed to do a five to six year term. Gradually, the Indian units became more and the English units became less. Part of Dalton’s job during the war was to organize the duplicating and triplicating of Indian artillery. You had to have either men on their feet or mules because anything with wheels was no good.

India also sent many soldiers to the Middle East; the best known division that fought in the Middle East was the 4th Indian Division. They formed and trained regiments of all the other branches; they “milked” a percentage of officers and NCOs every year. If they had five Indian mountain regiments, they would turn around and make five more mountain or field regiments with the officers they got from the mountain regiment. The language barrier was destroyed by forcing everyone to learn English; all commands were given in English throughout.

The first thing you had to do was to send the people to school and teach them English. Just before the war, there was an experimental Indian field regiment called A Field Regiment; it was formed with mostly British officers, a few Indian officers and entirely Indian other ranks. It gradually became more Indianized; when it grew enough, they cut off some to form B Field Regiment.

You were expected to spend the tour in India when you signed onto the Royal Artillery. It was inevitable that you would go abroad; depending on one’s own wishes, you necessarily did not go to India. Dalton suspects that over half of the foreign stations were in India. If you were trained specially in heavy artillery, you would likely go to Singapore; if you were trained in horse or field artillery, you were more likely to go to India. Most people welcomed the idea of going to India, particularly the bachelors. It was recognized that in India, you received a viable command of troops; in peacetime in England, you were always being cut-back and “at half baked.”

The Indian army and the British army in India had to be kept at full strength because of the possibility of being called to active service on the Frontier at any moment. The moment you went to India, you joined a “live show”: everything was up to par; no one could be short in India. This is why anyone keen on his job or profession looked forward to going to India: you were able to have “a real man’s job.” It was also a great opportunity for the young men to enjoy various forms of sport for less than at home.

India was not as popular with the young married men. It was too hot for English women in the plains, families were forced to split; separation was not popular at all for those recently married and sometimes lead to matrimonial troubles. Sir Dalton did not go out to India until he was in his thirties; the Dalton’s had to have a...
certain amount of separation

Sir Dalton did not mind the separations because there were always opportunities to go up for the weekend and such

Sir Dalton spent three years in Egypt before going out to India; Egypt was a wonderful place to be as a soldier because it allows one to see other places

the ideas of sport and game applied in Egypt just as in India; one could afford to shoot duck and play polo

unless one belonged to a “well-off” family and could afford a good allowance, you were much better off abroad

the British kept a relatively large army in Egypt, enough to make their own life; it was similar to India in that respect

regiments would go to Egypt for three years and then on to India for nine years

the artillery is arranged into both regiments and batteries; batteries were more basic, with generally six guns

three to four batteries go to a regiment, which was once called a brigade

the changing of words is a bit confusing, according to Dalton, because they are misleading when applied to infantry, brigade means three regiments; in the gunners, brigade means one regiment

in most cases, the regimental headquarters would be one place with one or two batteries; the third battery would be in an out station

where Dalton was stationed (in an out-station), there was a British infantry battalion and an Indian Infantry battalion; there were various “odds and ends”

in war and during mobilization, the troops from there would be allocated would join up with another from elsewhere

there was no particular rationale for having artillery in some places and none in others; there would be a battery allotted to a regiment for training

there would be a battery per battalion or a gunner regiment per infantry brigade

on the Frontier, there were Indian battalions and a few English battalions who were only supported by Indian mountain artillery; you could not apply a field artillery on the terrain

Sir Dalton heard the Indian mountain artillery was useful in Burma because of the mountainous terrain; unable to get field artillery until they established suitable roads

horses were able to get over high passes, but vehicles were not

they went in with mountain artillery and came out with field artillery

once you were trained as a staff officer, your first job is with a regiment; you were then given a staff appointment, depending on the circumstances and your aptitude

Dalton was sent to Delhi headquarters in 1937; he stayed until 1942, by which time Dalton considered himself “unemployable” in the outside world

Dalton did not know the first thing about mechanical warfare when he went out; by the time he left Delhi, he had been promoted to lieutenant colonel

when he returned to regimental work, Dalton was ready to command

in 1943, Dalton was sent to Burma as a brigadier to command the artillery of an Indian division with a British commanding officer

there were three brigades, called Indian brigades; in each brigade, there were two Indian battalions and one British

Dalton spent the rest of the war in Burma; he would return to India because of his rheumatism, where he trained Indian troops

Dalton went to the hospital in 1944 for a check-up, when he asked the surgeon for pain
medication for his back; the surgeon ran some tests and the medical board determined that
Dalton was unfit to return to Burma
484 Dalton and family returned home to England the day the war ended in August 1945
490 it was not difficult adapting to England after being abroad for so long
495 Dalton was not allowed any decent military command because of his medical history; he
wanted to appeal the down-grade in 1946
512 they had to request his medical history from India, which was very chaotic at the time
514 after a month, Dalton was informed that the administrators lost the documents
515 Dalton remarked that he could not think of anything that was wrong with him, only that
they told him he was category-B; the doctor replied they did not have any proof and ran
certain tests
525 the doctors could not find anything wrong with him, granting him category-A status
530 Dalton was then promoted and returned to the War Office as head of a branch; he later went
back out to Germany, acting as a liaison between the British troops and the Germans and
between the high commissioner and the British Commander and Chief
551 competition was intense in those days, and there were two ways of getting into the staff
college: direct competition or nomination
563 end of Side A

Tape 877, Side B
Dalton and Dinwiddies (Part 2 of 2) (877.2)
016 Dinwiddie joined in October of 1918 in Peshawar, which was just after the hot weather; it
was a large station
021 everyone had good fun from the start, although the pay was microscopic
023 even though the pay was small, one could do a lot on it
027 the following summer, a new ruler appeared in Afghanistan; Dinwiddie went off to fight
the new regime
029 this started a number of troubles on the frontier, which lasted until 1923; this was also the
time when the bulk of the Indian army was in Mesopotamia
033 there were games and work; leave to return home occurred every third year
038 Dinwiddie cannot think of a happier time
041 Kashmir was like Switzerland in a way with all the beautiful country; there was a brilliant
sun and snow tops; there were many lakes as well
045 it was a free and easy type of life; camping was a nice change of pace from the conforming
way of life
050 there was a couple that had went up to Kashmir to go fishing; they enjoyed it so much that
they wanted to go back, but the war came and prevented them
055 they were given a passage out to India after the war; they would fly out Friday afternoon
and be fishing by Saturday evening
060 before the war, one had to go up 220 miles of winding road and then a three to four day hike
to get to that fishing spot
064 there are now beautiful rest houses all the way up that are all furnished
065 the husband commented on how nice it was to be back, but he had preferred it the old way
068 late one evening, the Dalton’s ran out of gas along one of the roads and had to spend the
night in the car; the next morning, a whole batch of Indians appeared and funneled enough
gas from their car into the Dalton’s car
086 everyone was very helpful when you were in trouble; they would go to any length to help
the Indians continued to have faith in their old officers; they tell the story of one of the sons of a Sikh that one of the men served with after they met by chance in India, when one of the men got into trouble, the officer could write to the deputy commissioner and get him to look into the situation; it frequently worked and the men received a fair hearing one of the good things about India and the British rule was that the British were able to help the Indians. Dalton wrote to the Indian’s boss, telling of the boy’s problems and asking if there was anything the boss could do; about eight months later, he received a letter stating that it worked and the boy was doing well there was the tradition of when someone arrived in a new place or during a festival, the local supermarket manager, who was an Indian, would arrive in your bungalow with a tray of fruits and treats; this was known as a dolly this was to get you accustomed to his shop traditionally, the British never took anything except one banana or such as a token; as much as you would have liked, you could never accept the whole tray this went in support of the claim that no one would take a bribe the British Army was always on the move; the great thing was to get to be contractor of a British battalion, which was a very lucrative job the agents would be sent to all of the stations, trying to persuade an officer to take them on every year, there was the “Trooping Program,” which was the movement of troops to and from India this document was very secretive, until the troops were disembarking at such places like Bombay; however, all the agents got hold of the document from headquarters they assumed they would hear from the brewers that one’s regiment or battalion was going out to India; the first information would always come from elsewhere, which would always be right the Chatfield Commission took place in 1938, when India was trying to get help from England to prepare for war in the end, Admiral Chatfield was sent out to India, with a guardsman amongst his staff, who had been posted elsewhere before; when the ship docked in Bombay, the guard’s bearer was there waiting at the dock the bearer’s response: “Oh Saab, I heard you were coming!” the “Bush Telegraph” was a wonderful piece of intelligence; the wealthy men had their spies everywhere the philosophy of the Indians was bribery, which was not considered to be anything out of the ordinary; it was a way of life this could apply to most of the world now an officer went to one of the carpet factories to make him some carpets for his house; eventually, the bungalow was ready and the carpets arrived too big as it turns out, the contractor had made all the houses one brick smaller all around and made thousands of rupees; the only reason he was found out was because of the officer a special team from England went out to India to investigate because the authorities in India were not competent enough to deal with all the fraud that was going out there was also another large scandal that was going on at the same time the engineer was working with the contractor in the scam, taking in half of the profits
because he was the man who was supposed to be “measuring up”

there were thirteen rupees to the pound at that time, being worth one shilling and sixpence

the carpet would have been worth about eight pounds

the Persian carpets manufactured in Persia were brought down by camel into India to sell; they would sell in the various areas until the hot weather returned, when they would return to their highlands

there would often be a carpet they would be unable to sell, which was when “the cunning British officer or his wife” would decide to buy; they had to sell the carpet

it was fun because word would spread when someone would be interested in buying a carpet; the sellers would come to your house, producing all their carpets for you to choose from; after you chose the carpet you wanted, you would then start bargaining and work towards a price both sides could accept

they would leave the carpet with you for a few days; when they returned, you would start bargaining again, eventually coming to some sort of agreement

the agreement would normally be about half to three-quarters the original price

all of the work on the rugs were done by hand, consisting of around 144 stitches to the square inch

the carpets manufactured in India are not made like those in Persia because they lack the quality

in 1920, there was the Arab Rebellion in Iraq; all of Iraq, which was still under the British army, went up in flames

if one was captured and considered a rebel, the village would be set on fire

there was a clever CO that would want to look around before burning the village; he gained many carpets that way

this proved to be a problem when he had to march through Baghdad with thirty donkeys, all loaded with looted carpets

to get around it, he had the donkeys lead down a side street so no one would know except for the dust cloud that followed them

a military academy was began in Baghdad after the war

there was a European firm that began factories in Persia, as opposed to the hand sewn methods, that altered the whole rug business

very few rugs are still hand crafted; they are mostly machine made now, but you can tell the differences at once

there would be the groups that would go down to the plains with merchandise to sell; they were very traditional in the international trading

communications are better now and most roads are much better

the Prince of Wales went out to India to visit during the cold weather of 1921/1922; he went all around India and eventually ended up in Rawalpindi

once there, he stayed in the Commissioner’s house

the Commissioner had a tank of water taken to the roof and, when the Prince pulled a chain, one of the men would pour water down upon him; there was a drain connected at the other end and this was how the Prince showered

the Indians were great at “make-shift”; they could make things up in no time at all

they discuss different Hindustani words, such as those for “to go” or “to make an arrangement”

end of Side B