

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

Tape 875 Finding Aid

INTERVIEWEE NAMES:

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**SERIES:** British Voices from South Asia**INTERVIEW DATES:**

York: 4/26/1978
Daltons: 4/27/1978

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 34 minutes

York: 47 minutes
Daltons: 47 minutes

OTHER MATERIALS: None**RESTRICTIONS:** Copyright retained by interviewee and/or the interviewee's heirs**NOTE:** Copyright and property rights are assigned jointly to Centre of South Asian Studies at the University of Cambridge and Louisiana State University and A & M College Libraries and its successor agencies.

INDEX

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

020 there would then be a period of troop training, then a period of squadron training and
finally regimental training in the last period

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

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

041 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

071 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

074 dinner was always very formal; you would put on “mess dress”

075 mess dress consisted of: a high collared stiff shirt with a black tie, overalls or tight trousers
that designated the area of the cavalry or infantry one belonged to, a white Eaton jacket,
and a dark blue waist coat

084 once a week, the club would hold “guest night”; at guest night, the regimental band would
play outside; there was lovely silver, drinking the main drink out of silver goblets

089 at the end of dinner, the band would play “God Save the King” on the veranda; you could
not smoke until they finished the song

097 there would be guests from the Indian Civil Service or some other regiment

101 Humphrey Lloyd decided the youngest had to be taught good manners; they were taught
bridge after dinner

104 it was a remarkable station because all the houses were stone houses, specially erected by
the [Nauseam?]; the barracks were all very substantial

108 the married officers and such had very good quarters

110 they did not play polo on Sundays, but it would be customary to go and play tennis with the
married officers

113 the married officers would arrange tennis parties, with tea and drinks following

114 there would always be a church parade in the morning, marching to the garrison church and
back to the mess after church for their drinks

117 you could very often get leave for the weekend to go off shooting, leaving late on Friday
night

120 rest houses were located throughout India, maintained by the state; you had to provide your
own food, though York cannot remember

122 you had to provide your own bedding and mosquito netting; you never went without a
mosquito net

124 you would get up before dawn and shoot all morning (for it was too hot in the afternoon)
 127 the reservoirs were known as “tanks”; they could be fifty acres or more
 129 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
 133 it was a bit annoying because your gun would get wet, along with your cartridges
 134 they would also shoot big game, although York did not like it very much; panthers and
 tigers were the main targets
 136 you would go off on courses; York would go to [Pachmurrie?], which was a small arms
 course
 140 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
 144 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
 148 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
 151 he “lapped it up in great quantities”
 152 there were parties at the government house, at the officer’s club and in various married
 persons bungalows
 153 there was a lot of social life
 156 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
 165 there were places all over India that were surrounded by beautiful scenes
 166 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
 174 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
 180 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
 184 they could not have a weekend leave for one month
 190 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
 198 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
 201 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
 208 there was enormous competition to get into any Indian regiment or battalion
 211 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
 216 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
 219 the Indian army is still being run the same way today as it was then
 221 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
229 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
234 they were also completely un-political, although now the generals seem to be getting more
political
239 a British regiment would have a lot of officers; there were between thirty-two and
thirty-five total
244 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
254 as newly joined officers, you had to learn to shoe horses; it was “a jolly hot job”
260 they learned how to make the shoes; then had to prepare the horse’s foot and fit the shoe
271 this craft was learned in a temperature of about 120°
278 York once received six months sick leave
280 there were several leaves; during the hot period of the year, there was a rest camp at a hill
station
284 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
292 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
295 the hounds hunted jackals over the rolling hills
297 the hills were full of grazing grass for bullocks
299 between the hills was a bog
301 you would find a jackal in one of the woods, which had been specially picked
304 unless you knew the country well and were familiar with the crossings, you would always
become bogged down when trying to get across
308 this was a lot of fun as well
309 York would hunt four days a week during leave while in charge of the stables
310 there would normally be a party at night
311 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
326 you had to be careful of sun radiation; a tough planter who lived there would have adapted,
but York had not
328 York fished in shorts one day and then had to stay in bed for three; he had a terrible sunburn
on his knees
334 it was still exciting going there
335 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
343 at the military station, there would be rest houses, messes and such; you would rest there
and then motor on
354 you would drive past and through mountain blocks until you reached a beautiful rolling hill
country, which was wet and misty
358 they would stay there during the leave, which was about four weeks; they were very
generous when granting leave in those days
371 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

379 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

385 they would examine the shot and then telephone back to their British counterpart on the
firing line

387 the Nizam officers would play polo with York and others, but York does not remember
them participating in maneuvers

392 they were mostly Muhammadans and did not drink; they were never invited to drink parties
393 there were always funny restrictions

400 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

405 York received his home posting about 1936; he was later forced to leave the army because
of stomach troubles, but stayed on supplementary reserves

409 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)

413 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)

417 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

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

431 a "naafi" was a canteen where you could buy things; stands for: Navy, Army and Air Force
Institution

450 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

453 if you decided to join the army, you went where you were told

457 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

464 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

470 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

478 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

486 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

494 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

507 the Nizam had to follow the directions of the resident

509 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

515 York was selected as one of those able to go on the trip

522 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

092 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
 095 the walls were very thick, deadening any sound
 098 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
 105 they would go into the “nearest big place”, but only with an escort; the unrest on the
 Frontier prevented one from going out unattended
 111 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
 114 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
 129 it is an artificial way of hunting without killing game
 131 they would hunt jackal in [Bishar?]; it was very fun
 133 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
 137 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
 142 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”
 146 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
 147 you would then have drinks in the evening
 149 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
 151 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
 155 Lady Dalton talks of a type of skin that was worn in India by both men and women
 173 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
 189 in a matter of a few days, the area around the bungalow would go from dry and dusty to
 having animals grazing on it
 195 for about six weeks to two months after the rains, life would then be very pleasant; there
 would then be the gradual warming again
 200 they would go out onto the countryside to shoot snipe and duck; they talk of other game
 they would sometimes hunt
 220 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
 222 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
 243 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
 253 there were also scorpions and praying mantis to be cautious of; geckoes were useful in
 catching flies and such
 258 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
 264 the Dalton’s once had a mongoose to protect from snakes; they would go after a snake

immediately
 272 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
 285 there were miniature gray striped squirrels, called tree rats; they were beautiful to look at
 by a nuisance
 294 Dalton left the army headquarters in Delhi in 1942 to take on a more active, fighting role;
 the family went down to the hills
 305 there was an incident there involving a mad dog
 307 rabies was very prevalent, so the Dalton’s normally refrained from keeping small animals
 311 the rabies would be brought into the area by wild jackals that would go into the house dust
 pans, scavenging for food
 315 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
 332 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
 340 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
 351 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
 363 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
 369 there were also panthers and jackals that would come extremely close; they never really did
 much though
 377 the Dalton’s once went down for a tiger shoot during Christmas; they did not get a tiger,
 however
 383 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
 396 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
 405 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
 421 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
 429 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
 433 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
 439 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
 454 you managed to get around the language barriers with those that did not speak English
 460 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