

## 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

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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

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