Viceroy’s 1926 summer garden party

Indian high society enjoy refreshments in the gardens at Belvedere House in Calcutta, at a party held to welcome the new Viceroy, Lord Irwin.

Most likely made by Madan Theatres Ltd, this short film let Indian cinema audiences imagine they were rubbing shoulders with India’s elite and catch a glimpse of the men who ruled their country, and their families. We see not one but two viceroys: Lord Irwin (shown in the first table shots) became Viceroy in April 1926 after Lord Lytton, (who was Governor of Bengal and is seen in the second table shot) filled the post on a temporary basis.

Held in Belvedere House, the Viceregal residence before India’s capital was moved to Delhi in 1911, later shots in the film show Lady Dorothy Wood (Irwin’s wife) and Lytton’s wife Pamela as well as their children, Ann Wood and Anthony and Davina Bulwar-Lytton, who are seated at a ‘children’s table’ along with an Indian royal prince. In spite of these festivities, Irwin’s period as viceroy was not easy as he oversaw intense Indian protests for further political devolution and was forced to negotiate with Gandhi to bring the nationwide Civil Disobedience movement to an end.

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