

Quarterly Tours – No. 3



National Trust – Sri Lanka

26th August 2006

Compiled by Nilan Cooray

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Quarterly Tours – Saturday, 26th August 2006

Programme

0700 hrs : Leave PGIAR
0800 hrs : Malvana Fort
0845 hrs : Hanwella Fort
10 00 hrs : Sitavaka Fort
10 30 hrs : Barandi Kovil
11 30 hrs : Reucastle Bridge
13 00 hrs : Lunch at Galgodawatta: (Week- end hide- out
of Mr.& Mrs. U.L.Kadurugamuwa)
14 30 hrs : Leave for Nadun Vihara
15 15 hrs : Nadun Vihara
16 00 hrs : Mahasaman Devale, Ratanapura.
17 00 hrs : Leave for Colombo
19 00 hrs : Arrive at the PGIAR

Malvana Fort



Sketch of General de Azevedo Cannon balls found at the site

Located at the bank of Kelani River, the site is only about 200 meters from the Malvana junction. It was established by the Portuguese Captain – General Don Jeronimo de Azevedo in the 16th century. At present, the site is a private property containing a house. Although few physical remains of the fortifications are to be seen, the contours of the site indicate the positions of its bastions. Across the river are timber piles that are believed to be the remains of an ancient wooden bridge across the Kelani River. Canon balls and house hold items found at the site probably belong to the Portuguese period.

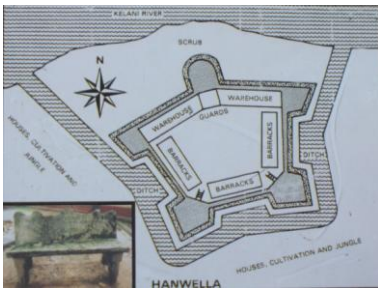
Paul E Pieris writing about the Portuguese Era in Sri Lanka states about Malvana thus:

“In the midst of the most fertile and agreeable region of this Desawani stood Malvana where de Azevedo constructed the

Casa from which the General were known locally as Kings of Malvana. Here de Azevedo resided for nine years, and it was from here that Pereyra directed the military operations during his administration. Close to this de Sa erected his fortress, and after his defeat and death both the one and the other were destroyed by Raja Sinha II. A large establishment of iron-smiths was maintained at Malvana for the royal service”.

Peiris notes further that the names Yabaraluwa and Kammalwatta, village close to Malvana, still retain the recollection of this establishment.

Hanwella Fort



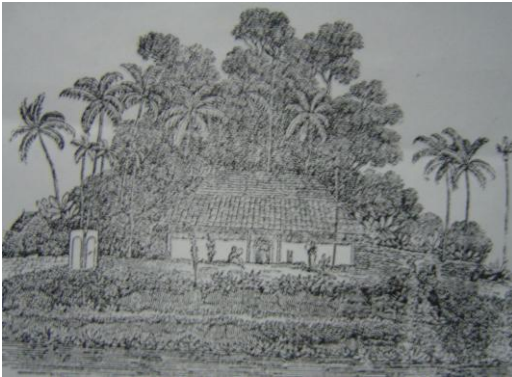
Layout of the Fort



A Sketch of the Fort

Located in the heart of the Hanwella town and on the bank of Kelani Rover, the premises of the present Rest House at Hanwella is the location of the Dutch Fort. At present, only the remnants of the fortifications and the moat can be seen. This picturesque site was a major shooting location of the famous Sinhala film “*Ganga Addara*” director by Mrs. Sumitra Peiris in early 1980’s.

The Prince of Wales stopped at this Rest House for a meal on his way and return from the elephant kraal near Labugama in 1887. A plaque on the garden seat records this visit and near it is a jak tree that he planted on this occasion.



A sketch of the Rest House

The Rest House retains a substantial part of the old fabric and the Department of Archeology needs to be encouraged to restore it to its origins state. The origins of the Rest House could well have been from the time of the Dutch Fort at the site as John Davy on 11th March, 1819 states that to set out from Colombo and proceeded Hanwella where he slept. In his book “An Account of the Interior of Ceylon” records thus:

“I witnessed at dawn at half past four, the full moon was still high in the west, and Jupiter in the east; the sky was of the purest blue, excepting over the grey Kandyan hills, where a just perceptible tint of yellow marked the approach of day: not a breath of air was stirring; the smooth river (the Kalany Ganga) that ran by, reflected the light of the moon and the shadows of the groves of cocoa- nut trees on its banks; the air was most agreeably cool, of the temperature 70⁰ ; the grass and leaves

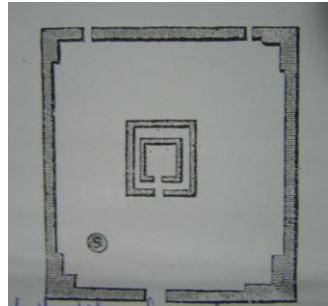
were covered with dew; some doves answered each other in an adjoining wood, and the air was so still, that even the faint echo of their cooings was heard:- the whole was a tropical scene of solemn and tranquil beauty, that could hardly be surpassed”.

Sitavaka Fort

Originally a fortification of the Sinhala Kings, the Dutch Fort at Sitavakais located the banks of Sitavaka Oya as modern Avissawella. The site is also associated with the ephic Rama-Ravana Story. First palace established by King Mayadunne, on an elevated location is a fortification built of cabook and rubble as is still visible. In the middle of the fortifications are the remains of a central building resembling an European castle of the Middle Ages.



General view



Plan of the Fort

The way to the site in June 1819, as described by John Devy and the remains found at Sitavaka are given as follows:

“About half a mile beyond Avisahavelle, is Sittawakka, where there is a ferry over a pretty considerable river of the same name. The ferry is provided with a large boat, which is plied backward and forward, not by oars or poles, but by means of a strong flexible cane, stretched across and fastened to the opposite banks, by pulling on which the boatmen effect a passage with great facility.

“Sittawakka, once a royal residence, and a place of considerable consequence, is now merely a name. No traces of what it once was are now to be seen by the traveler passing along the road; and for a considerable time none were supposed to exist. Lately, some remains of buildings have been discovered. In June, 1819, when traveling this way the third time, I was conducted by the natives to an old fort, concealed by wood, situated on a tongue of elevated ground, formed by the confluence of a small deep stream with the river. I went in a boat, and ascended from the river by a short flight of hewn-stone steps, and after walking about a hundred yards, came to the building, which I found to be nearly square, formed of three walls, one within the other, thus: The walls were of kabook, as the stone is called by the natives; and in this instance, as in most others, appeared to be clay, strongly impregnated with red oxide of iron, to which, probably, it owes its property of hardening by exposure to the atmosphere. The outer wall was between eight and ten feet high, and six and eight wide. It was widest at its angles, where it communicated with the enclosure by steps. Between this wall and the next, the distance might be twenty-four or thirty feet; the space was overgrown with bushes. Here I observed a deep well, carefully made, and its sides lined with masonry. The second wall, only a very few feet from the inner, seemed intended for its defence. The inner enclosure was probably roofed, and was the donjon-keep of the fortress. There were no marks of its having been divided into different compartments, and, indeed, it was hardly large enough to admit of it. The natives, who call this ruin Kotua (a fort), have a tradition, which is probably correct, that it was built and occupied by the Portuguese when the neighbourhood was the arena of bloody contention between

these bold invaders and the princes of Sittawakka. The nature of the building, the circumstance of there being a good well within its walls, its situation on the Colombo side of the river and nearly opposite to the spot on which there is reason to believe the palace and town of Sittawakka formerly stood, seem to be proofs of the correctness of the tradition. Be this as it may, the ruin was not uninteresting, and might have been worth preserving; I say, might, -knowing that the work of destruction has commenced, and that the walls which two centuries, at least, had spared, have been pulled down either in part or entirely, and their stones removed to build a new rest-house. The curious traveler will complain of this measure; whilst the indolent one will bless his stars for being saved the trouble of forcing his way through thickets to see an old ruin, the materials of which, newly arranged, afford him a comfortable shelter”.

Barandi Kovil



Location of the Kovil and the Sitavaka Fort

The Barandi Kovil is a Hindu temple dedicated to God Siva and is located close to Talduwa Junction, which is along the Avissawella – Kegalle Road. To reach the site one has to turn right after crossing the Sitavaka Oya.

Although the chroniclers ascribe this monument to King Sitavaka Rajasinghe who ascended to the throne in 1584, the Portuguese records indicate that its origin goes beyond the era of King Sitavaka Rajasinghe. Probably it was first established by King Sitavaka Mayadunne, the predecessor to King Rajasinghe. The main object of worship was the Siva Lingam which is not seen at present. Built according to the Chola architectural tradition of South India, this Kovil closely resembles the stone built Siva Devale No 2 at Polonnaruwa. John Davy who saw this in June 1819 states:

“I visited some ruins on the right bank of the river, distant from it about a hundred and fifty yards and nearly opposite to the fort. These remains were, I understand, first noticed by Mr. Maitland. The jungle, with which they were completely overgrown, has been partially cleared by Major Bayley, the commandant of the district, by whom they were pointed out to me. The approach to them is by a bridge, composed of large flat stones, each about fifteen feet long, three or four wide and about two feet thick. At the distance of about twenty yards, on a rising ground, there is an enclosure (a parallelogram, a hundred and twenty feet by ninety) surrounded by a wall formed of large blocks of hewn stones. In the center of this area are the foundations, and parts of the walls of a small and handsome temple, probably a dewale, which was substantially and neatly built of cut and cared stones. Judging from the appearance of its remains, it is evidently pulled down, and not ruined by the slow operation of time, of which there are few marks. Popular tradition refers its destruction to the Portuguese, who, we very well know, showed their religious zeal, whenever occasion offered, by overthrowing the works of Indian superstition. Other ruins are said to exist in the adjoining jungle; they are probably the remains of temples, or of the royal palace of Sittawakka, and not of the town itself, the clay-walls of the houses of the natives being even more perishable than their inhabitants”.

Reucastle Bridge



Reucastle Bridge built across a substantially wide river within the Reucastle Estate, is one of Sri Lanka’s surviving “suspended cable bridges” for medium weight vehicular traffic. The picturesque location and the sheer height above the gushing waters add value to this engineering marvel. Kitul planks have been used as floor boards over the tensioned cables.

Nadun Vihara



Nadun Vihara is located off Idangoda which is along the Panadura- Ratnapura Road. It is said to have been established by King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe, the temple has an image house with sculpture and painting belong to the kandyan period. The temple has been so named because of the timber asana for the Buddha image, constructed out of Nadun wood, which is embedded in the masonry of the image. The temple is a well maintained country shrine with large extents of land endowed by the Kandyan Kings and still retained by the temple. The shrine has same rare artifacts.

Mahasaman Devale



Located in Ratnapura along the Panadura – Ratnapura highway, this deistic shrine is dedicated to God Saman, the deity in – charge of the Sri Pada range (*Samamala – kandu - yaya*). Built during the 14th century, this shrine forms the nucleus of a village termed as devala – gama. The devale compound also contains a Buddha image house and it reflects a society of integrated religious traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism. The main street was laid along the major axis of the devale compound and was originally lined with dwellings owned by the ancestral office bearers of the devale. At the end of the street was the asana or the seat to place the throne during annual procession. Beyond the dwellings were the paddy fields.

This shrine complex which consists of two terraces is enclosed, elevated and quite extensive. The lower terrace is a spacious courtyard, which is enclosed by a roofed parapet wall. The upper terraces consist of three shrines for Saman, the Buddha and Pattini. The image of the God Saman is placed within the sanctum of the main devale, while the vestibule or the dig-ge is to accommodate the devotees. The main building is the devale facing northeast. It has a budge on one side and a Pattini Devale on the other side. The Bo-tree stands on the front terrace together with the mandapas or open halls for the ratha or chariot, etc. Routes have been set apart for the perehara. The store and the kitchen of the devale are placed alongside the main shrine. These buildings are elegantly enclosed with a parapet wall that has a roof. The mahavidiya extends out in front of the main entrance towards the depository, which is about 200 yards away. Some of the houses of the serfs along this street still remain. This village complex has an extra outer processional path with houses facing the circular road. As at Uggal Alutnuvara this feature records a further stage of development in medieval village planning.

The 1415/16 snnasa or copper engraving of the Laksmana Maha-Develaya in Sabaragmu records these buildings as follows:

“..... by furnishing it with ramparts, gates, doors ranges of streets, land, choultries, three-storied palaces, thrones, elephant-stalls, horse-stables, image houses, halls, bo-trees, dagabas, monasteries, libraries, parks, pleasure gardens, etc. bestowed liberal gifts.....”

This shrine, which had been destroyed by the Portuguese, was re-built subsequently.

