

# Quarterly Tours



Jayatissa Herath

**NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA**

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**Route:**

Commencing from  
PGIAR  
Kottawa and along  
New Expressway to Matara

Rest House, Matara

**Star Fort**

**Parevi Doova**

**Fort of Matara**

walk inside Fort

**Dutch Reformed Church**

**Old Buildings inside Fort**

**Old Buildings out side Fort**

**Mosque**

**Nupe Market**

and

**Weherahena** (*if time permits*)

*back*

*via Galle - Cloisenburg hotel*

*to*

*Colombo - PGIAR*

*Please refer page 15 and 16 for tentative programme and  
detail map of the places to be visited*

## The Tour

The Second Quarterly tour of the year 2014 is organized to give the participants an overview of the built heritage in Southern part of the island that can be appreciated and enjoyed in a day trip starting from Colombo using the extended Express way.

## Matara

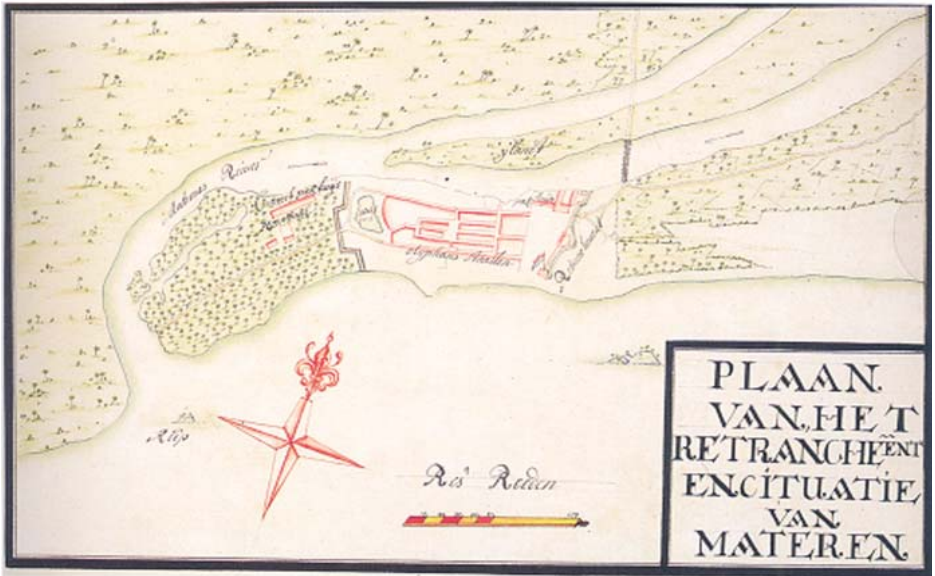
The Matara city is located near the southern tip of the island bordering the Dondra Bay. It is a major administrative and commercial centre of the southern region next to Galle.

The city consists of a fortified area and an outer area of which the history runs back to Dutch occupation in A.D. 1640. The Fort was located in the peninsula formed by the river Nilvala at south and separated from the rest of the town. There is no evidence for its existence during the Portuguese period and before. But this could have been the administrative centre of the province during Kandyan kingdom and that might have paved the way to select this particular location for the construction of military outpost by the Dutch probably succeeding the Portuguese.

Matara happened to be one of the major ancient settlements in the region but there is no evidence to prove this other than historical beliefs. It was already a well populated and developed settlement when the Portuguese arrived in the island. Matara had been used by Portuguese

for troop concentration. But there is no clue to say that there was a Portuguese Fort. Matara was attracted by the Dutch for trading of cinnamon products and elephants.

The Matara was taken by the Kandyan kings with help of native rebellions by defeating the Dutch and retained the city in their hands for a period of nearly a year around A.D. 1760. The Dutch were able to recapture Matara and created an additional fort to mitigate the defense weaknesses revealed during rebellion actions.



Plan of the fortress and situation of Matara

Coloured manuscript, 22 x 38 cm, 18<sup>th</sup> century  
 Courtesy Leiden University Library, Nos. 002-11-059/061

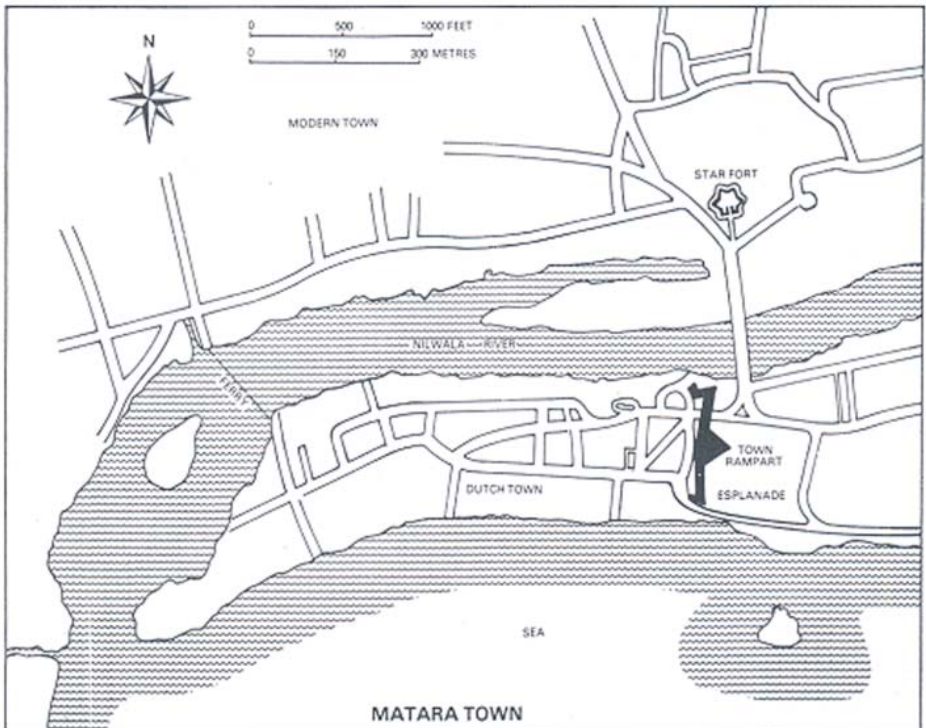
## Matara Fort (E)

The Fort was built by the Dutch on the left bank close to the mouth of the river on the land called Uggalbavila. The Kandyan forces together with native rebellions shattered the fort in A.D. 1760 and held in their hands for almost a year. Matara was the second important military base of the Dutch for Southern Maritime Provinces and had been the commanding base for most inland forts. The Dutch had ceremoniously handed over the Fort of Matara to the British in A.D. 1796.

This fort has a unique setup owing to its location and the Dutch has ignored the possibility of an inland attack thus the fort had a rampart only on its shortest length facing the land. The rampart had two half

bastions on either sides and a full bastion located close to the gate at the centre projecting out ward and also a ditch in front according to the description given by RK de Silva & WGM Beumer. But there is no trace of this ditch anymore. The central bastion was accessible by means of a bridge across the ditch. There were no walls or ramparts on other sides and the fort is surrounded by river and the sea.

A Map drawn in A. D. 1698 gives a detail description of the Architecture and Planning of the Fort and its environs. In this map, the location of the draw bridge, which gives access to the main entrance arch, is clearly indicated over the Nilvala River. The entrance arch is still intact. Although the shape of the pond is different to that of the other drawings, this also gives evidence to the existence of a pond. In this



plan there is a moat behind fort area just after the bathing pond of the elephants. It is said that there had been a dwarf Dam to divert river water into the Fort area.

It is doubtful that there was a rampart at the rear even if some of early illustration shows that there had been a rampart in the rear too. The pond which was shown in early maps could easily accommodate around eighty elephants for bathing. There had been a small church inside the fort behind the rampart-wall keeping in line with the gateway and few houses. Stables for elephants were located in-between the pond and the quarters of the inhabitants. The garrison was a small one.

Administrative functions had been located behind the rampart. Among them were law courts, secretariat, and land registry. It is said that this was not a good fort in terms of defense requirements.

A clock tower erected during the British period on the rampart has become an important feature and a land mark. The rampart of the Matara Fort is well preserved and can be seen even today except for the southern bastion which was removed to get easy access outward along the sea side and the northern limit which is in the hands of the army. Some new buildings and alterations have disturbed the architectural integrity of the place.

Today the ditch is not visible at any of the locations. The Church Building and the Front lawn are still intact but seem to be under the threat of new developments. The Dutch town can still be recognized with its street pattern and few samples of existing Dutch style buildings. Most of the old buildings have been replaced or modified as a continuing process.

The rear side has no moat or rampart at present. It is not clear that whether there was one or a boundary to Southern side. There are many recently developed building sites in the fort. Most probably these sites must have been with buildings belonging to Dutch period or Buildings with Dutch architecture.

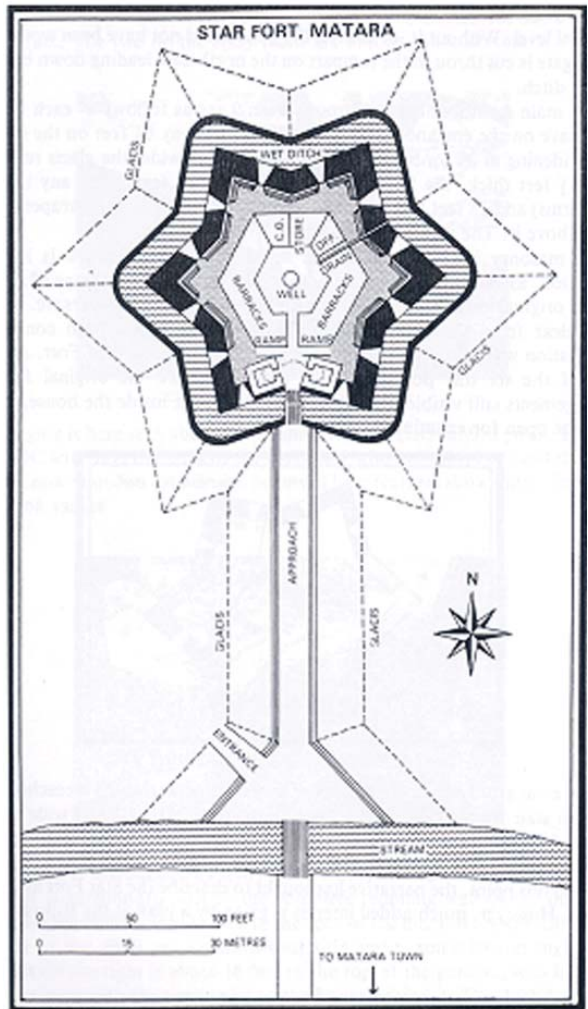
## Star Fort

(C)

Star Fort is said to be the last major defensive fort built by the Dutch VOC company. Since the Dutch had to evacuate the fort of Matara after the defeat by rebellion they realized the shortfalls of defense from the land side. Soon after they recaptured Matara, under the command of Governor Lubert Jan Baron Van Eck, and erected the Star fort during 1763 and 1765. The person in charge of the building works of the Star Fort was recorded as Orukema Muhandiram. The fort was named the "Redoute Van Eck" meaning "independent out work standing apart from the place it was set up to defend".

The Dutch were not in a position to use the Star Fort for a long time as the British took possession of the Maritime Provinces in 1796. It is said that, since then the building seemed to have been controlled by the Civil Administration and undergone several changes and additions.

The Archeological Commissioner Ayrtton had



visited the place in 1914. According to his explanation the fort was completely covered with modern additions. He had ordered the removal of those additions to regain the original character of the fort. Since then it was under the hands of the Public Works Department even though there was a decision of the State Council in 1914 which was not implemented to hand this building to Archeological Department for proper maintenance. The building was utilized by Urban Council to function as Public Library and during that time (during 1965) the roofs were covered with Cadjan. The Star Fort building had been handed over to the Department of Archeology in early 80's and it was brought to present restored state thereafter.



designing a fort.

The shape of this particular fort is Star like with six points jutting outwards. Those points were gun embrasures. The Fort is surrounded by a ditch and glacis around. There is a draw bridge to cross the ditch at the entrance arch from the south. The access way is cut through the glacis from the south side. The ditch is surrounded by a compact retaining wall which is 10 feet high. The rampart is beyond the ditch and it is about 16 feet high. The Plan given in W.A.Nelson -The Dutch in Sri Lanka-1984-p.64 provides a clear layout of the Dutch period planning.

Cross sectional drawings in Nelson's book provide detail about the ditch, gate, glacis, and rampart, magazines drain etc. They are very important details to understand the construction of the Star Fort which can be recognized as a common detail for

The entrance Arch way is enriched with Dutch lettering and the emblem or arms of Governor Van Eck carved in wooden frame and above that the name of the fort and the date 1763. There were two inscriptions inside and outside the keystone of the Arch. Gun powder magazines were located on either side beyond the entrance arch. The straight entrance provided access to quarters and the central court yard. In addition to the barracks and two large halls there is a well inside the fort at the centre of the court yard.

The Star Fort is now maintained by the Department of Archeology after the restoration, which brought the fort to its original characteristics. The rampart is being used as a museum which provides historical data and information about the history and development of Matara.



## Dutch Reformed Church

(F)

The Dutch Reformed Church is the only monument within the Matara Fort which has survived without alterations from the Dutch occupation. Although the date above the entrance to the Church bears 'Anno 1767', the original foundations of the church were much older. The façade was remodeled and the stamp placed eventhough the original construction dates back to A.D. 1686.

Although its gable facade reflects Dutch architecture, its half round tiled roof, the wide verandah supported on pillars give it a strong tropical flavour. There are tomb stones paved on the floor dating from 1686. These tomb stones contain memories of a bygone era. The memorial plaques of the tomb stones give an interesting insight into the life of the Dutch, British and native people who lived in Matara.



## Parevi Doova

(D)

The small island situated in the close proximity to the rest house and the main bus terminal of Matara is now converted to a Buddhist temple. It is a good example for adverse impacts created by haphazard developments vandalizing both its natural beauty and potential of the location to experience the vistas offered.



## The Court View Hotel

(H)

The building with the decorated colonnaded verandah projecting out ward is another good example to experience the characteristics of the buildings constructed during the Dutch period. Although the building has been neglected for a long time and has no means of maintenance, its elegance has been lost but its features are still worth of looking at. Especially the utilization of timber for decorative and structural elements is very significant.



## Matara Nursing Home Building

(I)

This is a good example to understand the spatial and architectural characteristics of Dutch manor houses. Front colonnaded veranda, large sitting area, front room, tall interior, rear court yard, and other architectural features like decorated windows, column details, door sashes are significant features to understand the intrinsic qualities of such buildings. It is said that the building was belong to an elite family of the area.



## Carlton Press – (one of the Lorenz’s houses)

(J)

This two storied building is said to be originally constructed by an eminent lawyer known as Lorenz as one of his residences in Matara during colonial regime. This building is now being used as printing press and a residence. The upper floor is now being conserved and repaired maintaining the original characteristics.





## Cooperative Hospital Building

(K)

This house known as Maha Walawwa belonged to the Illangakoon family of the area and now houses the Cooperative Hospital of Matara.



## Mosque in Matara

(L)

The mosque known as the Muhideen Jumma Masjid is the central mosque in Matara built adjacent to the river Nilvala. The white mosque is an attractive sight when travelling on the bridge over the river. The interior of the mosque building is also painted in white and decorated differently to other mosques in the island.

## Nupe Market.

(M)

The building is believed to be erected in A.D.1784 probably by the British to house the market at the Nupe Junction is a unique piece of architecture with its intrinsic features like, large masonry columns, peculiar timber trusses, steep roofs with half round tiles, three small raised and projected roofs on the front roof and the rear court yards. The timber portico is also very attractive and significant.

Later the building was left without maintenance and neglect resulting collapse of a part of the building. The efforts of Archeological Department in

1980 s with the help of Urban Development Authority brought back the glamour of the built fabric back into its original status.



## Weherahena Temple

The temple is situated in the village of Weherahena and is called as Purvarama Vihare. The tunnel Image House and the colossal statue of Lord Buddha with ambulatory paths at different levels of the statue has made the place more popular among the Buddhists as well as non Buddhists in the country and internationally as well.



## Tentative Programme

A	07.00 AM		Leave PGIAR
	07.30 AM		Express way Entry - Makumbura (Kottawa) for Matara
		09.00 AM	Expressway Exit - Godagama (Matara)
B	09.15 AM		Comfort Break - Rest House Matara
		09.45 AM	Leave Rest House
C	10.00 AM		Matara Star Fort
		10.45 AM	Leave Matara Star Fort
D	11.00 AM	11.30 AM	Parevi Doova and / or St Mary's Convent
E	11.45 AM		Dutch Fort Matara
F	12.00 PM		Dutch Reformed Church
H			Old House in side Fort- Court View Hotel
			Walk inside the Fort
B	01.00 PM		Lunch At Rest House Matara
		01.45 PM	Leave Rest House after Lunch
	02.00 PM		Arrive the city outside the fort
I	02.15 PM		Old House - Nursing Home building
J	02.35 PM		Old House - one of the Lorenz's houses - Carlton Press
K	3.00 p.m		Old House - Cooperative Hospital, Matara
L	03.30 PM		Mosque near Mahanama bridge
		03.45 PM	Leave Mosque
M	04.00 PM		Nupe Market
		04.30 PM	Leave Nupe Market
	04.45 PM		Express way Entry - Godagama for Galle
		05.15 PM	Express way Exit - Pinnaduwa
N	05.30 PM		Comfort Break - Closenburg, Galle
		06.00 PM	Leave Closenburg
	06.15 PM		Express way Entry - Pinnaduwa for Colombo
		07.15 PM	Express way Exit - Kottawa
A	8.30 PM		PGIAR

### *Credits:*

*Maps and plans - GoogleMaps and World Wide Web  
K.D Paravithana & R.K.De Silva - Maps and Plans of  
Dutch Ceylon 2002*

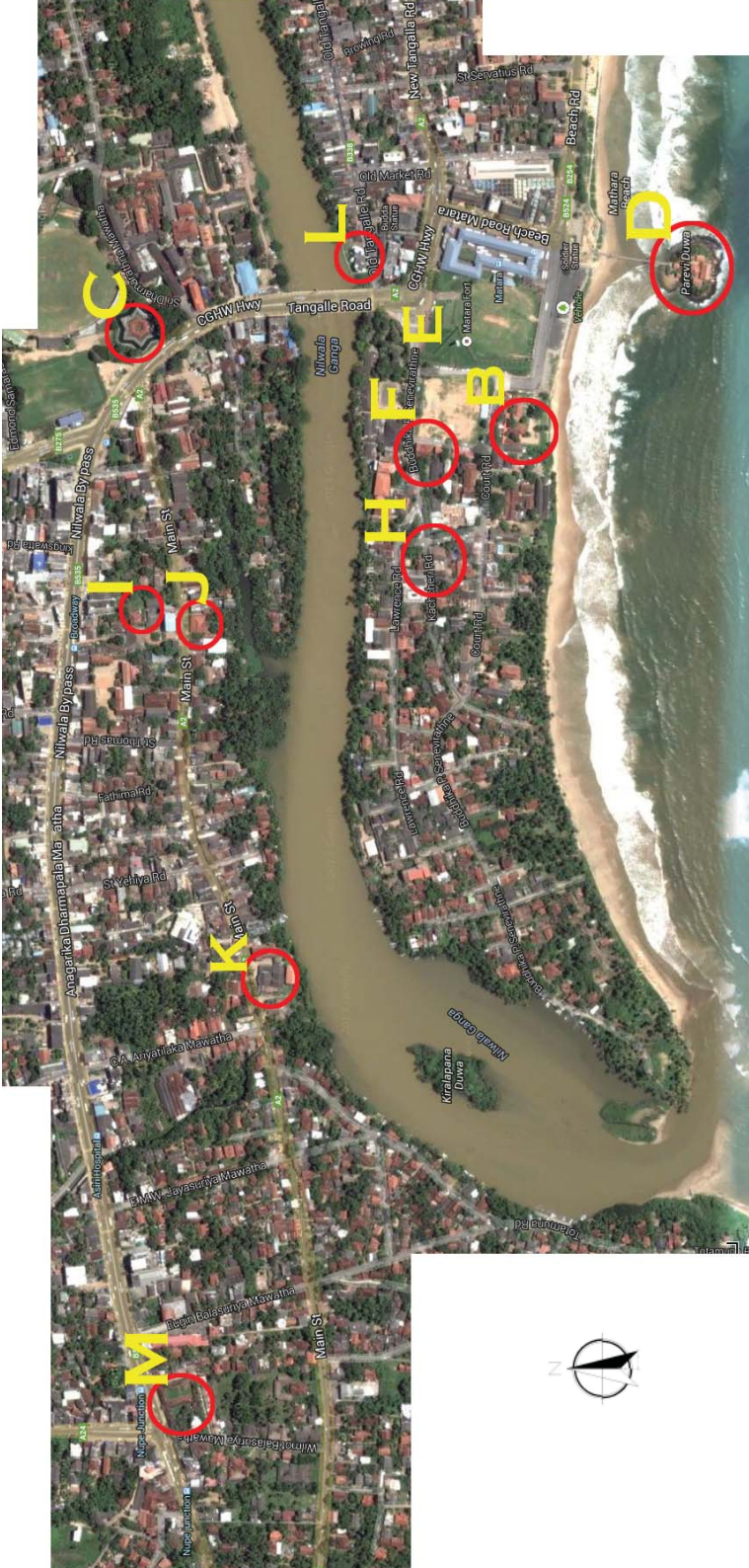
*R.K.De Silva & W.G.M. Beurmer- Illustrations and Views  
of Dutch Ceylon 1988.*

*W.A.Nelson - The Dutch Forts of Sri Lanka 1984*

*Nilan Cooray - Heritage Day Tours ( Volume 1) – 2014*

*University of Moratuwa -Report on Recommendations  
for conservation of Dutch Forts in the Island,  
unpublished report.*





Google Map of Matara showing places to be visited under this Tour