

Quarterly Tours – No. 2



National Trust – Sri Lanka

3rd June 2006

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Quarterly Tours – Saturday, 3rd June 2006

Programme

- 0700 hrs: Leave PGIAR
- 0730 hrs: Citadel of Rayigama
- 0830 hrs: Veedagama Temple
- 0930 hrs: Rajaguru Sri Subhuti Vihara at Waskaduwa
- 1100 hrs: Richmond Castle off Kalutara
- 1300 hrs: Lunch at Bentota Beach Hotel
- 1430 hrs: Brief: House and Garden at Bentota
- 1530 hrs: Lunuganga at Bentota
- 1630 hrs: Arabic University at Beruwala
- 1730 hrs: Harbour and sea-side Mosque at Beruwala
- 1800 hrs: Leave for Colombo
- 1900hrs: Arrive at the PGIAR

Citadel of Rayigama



The citadel of Rayigama is located about 3 km from Bandaragama, along the Panadura – Ratnapura A8 Road. At the 12 km post, one turns south and proceeds 200 m to the fortified precinct. On the right is the 15th century citadel, one of the many capitals of the country. This was established by Rayigam Bandara as the capital for the regional kingdom. It is from here that the father of Parakramabahu VI (1412 – 1467) was taken captive to China, as he refused to hand over the sacred Tooth and Bowl relics to the envoy, Zhen He, of the Chinese Emperor. The citadel is a rectangular precinct of 4.5 acres in extent. The kabook rampart, which defended the citadel, is 2.5 m wide at its base and is still in a fair state of preservation. The site is presently referred to as *Pathahawatta* in Sinhala or the land named after the royal bath by the village folks, due to the presence of a large rectangular pond located to the north-east of the citadel. This is the only structure that has survived from the historical period. The interesting feature of this pond is that it was constructed upon a raft foundation using timber beams.



Presently, the site is occupied by a modern Buddhist temple with an image house and a preaching hall of the mid 20th century, built in the architectural style of the period. Carved stone elements such as an elephant gargoyle, a urinal cum latrine slab etc. are some of the sculptural embellishments of the historical period, seen lying within the citadel.

Veedagama Temple

Veedagama Temple is about half a kilometer from the Bandaragama junction, on the northern side of the Panadura – Ratnapura A8 Road. This is where the scholar monk, Veedagama Maitriya Thero, once resided and headed the monastic college. It is also the temple where the four year old prince, later King Parakramabahu VI, grew up after the king Vira Alakeshvara was taken captive to China. The 15th century Sinhala classics such as *Buduguna Alankara*, *Lo-Veda Sangarava*, *Kavya Lakshana Mini Malava*, *Hansa Sandeshaya*, *Elu Attanagalu Vanshaya* were all written by this monk. The site was the monastic college named Ganananda Parivena mentioned in the Mahavamsa and is believed to be affiliated to the Mahanethpa Mula, which is one of the four faculties of the Abhayagiriya monastery in Anuradhapura. The monastic college was later destroyed by the Portuguese. The present temple, however, dates from the early 19th century. Unfortunately, there are no built structures that can be attributed to the historical period at the site except a few stone columns, *makara* wingstones, etc. The only attraction from a



heritage point of view is the recently sculptured life-size statue of Ven. Veedagama Maitriya Thero, in an attitude of composing a literary work, which is seen at the entrance.

Rajaguru Sri Subhuti Vihara at Waskaduwa



Rajaguru Sri Subhuti Vihara is about 100 meters south of the 38 km post, on the Colombo - Galle A2 Road and to the east of it at Waskaduwa. This is the *vihara* where the Pali scholar monk Ven. Rajaguru Sri Subhuti Thero (1835 – 1917) resided. The library of the *vihara* was most famous and it was here that the Governor Sir Robert Chalmers learnt the Pali language from Ven. Subhuti Thero,

visiting the temple on horse back all the way from Colombo. Later, Chalmers translated several Pali texts in to English. The residential building or *avasa* of Ven. Subhuti Thero and the two storied library building are still being used, retaining the old palm leaf manuscripts and the valuable letters that the learned monk received from national and international organizations and individuals.

Richmond Castle off Kalutara



Richmond Castle, the residence of the Grand Chevalier N. D. A. Silva Wijesinghe, the Padikara Mudaliyar, is located about 3 km to the east of the clock-tower of Kalutara along the road leading to Ket-hena. Built in the first half of the 20th century, the two storied Neo- Renaissance castle of monumental proportion is positioned at the highest point of an extensive rubber estate, overlooking the Kalu-Ganga. The mansion is



surrounded by a landscaped garden which is a mixture of baroque and English revival styles. The property is presently under the custodianship of the Public Trustee.

Brief: House and Garden at Bentota

Brief was designed by Bevis Bawa, the brother of the famous architect Geoffrey Bawa. This house and garden is located along Galle Road in Bentota, only a few hundred meters from the junction where the road branches off to Elpitiya.



The property was a rubber plantation, which formerly belonged to his mother. Bevis Bawa began to remodel the estate into an outstanding landscaped garden in 1929. Named ‘Brief’, it is a play

on the senses, full of inviting nooks, alcoves, bowers and cloisters, and full of other paradoxes and illusions. The ground area is not extensive, yet some of the most beautiful spots – the

hilltop lookout with its lone *Aralia* trees, for example, are designed as surprises, to be stumbled upon by accident. The house is less illusive but full of art objects. Much of it is Bevis Bawa's own work. Of these, the beautifully proportioned sculptures of male nudes are perhaps the most remarkable. So are the murals by Donald Friend.

Lunuganga at Bentota



Lunuganga is located on a promontory, which projects into the Dedduwa Lake, sleepy black water loop of the Bentota River. Lunuganga (in Sinhala, the salty river), is undoubtedly, the

finest landscaped garden of post-independent Sri Lanka. This was designed by the internationally renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. The site is reached by turning south off the Bentota – Elpitiya road, 4 km. from Galle Road.

The site was formerly a Dutch cinnamon plantation and later a British rubber estate before Bawa bought it in 1949, to model his garden hide-out. Like his other projects, the design of the garden has a subtle blend of modern and traditional elements from the East to the West, and of formal and informal features. The garden consists of buildings with interconnected outdoor

rooms, shady terraces, open lawns and broad walks. It has been conceived as a series of separate self-contained spaces, to be walked through at leisure, or to be occupied at timeless moments.

Arabic University – The Jamiah at Beruwala.

Prof. M.A.M. Shukri has been requested to provide the group with a 15 minute discourse on the visit of Zheng He, the envoy of the Chinese Emperor on six of his seven voyages to the Indian Ocean, as described by Ma Huan, commencing in 1402 and visiting South Asia every second year. The trilingual inscription in Chinese, Persian and Tamil scripts, probably meant to be installed at Devinuvara, was found in 1911 at Galle and is now displayed at the Colombo National Museum. This has been translated in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 3, pp 331-41. It only refers to the gifts brought by Zheng He to be offered to Devinuvara, and to a relevant deity, possibly Hindu or Buddha, or any other. With regard to the visit of Zheng He to Beruwala, the statistics indicate that there were hundreds of ships with over twenty thousand Chinese troops on each occasion.

The questions that need to be raised are whether Beruwala Harbour provided enough space for such a large number of ships? How were the near twenty thousand troops fed during their stay at Beruwala? What is the origin of the street name at Beruwala which extends from the Harbour to the mosque on the hill called, “Chine Fort Road”? Was there a large Chinese community in Beruwala? If so, where are they now? Were they the many Chinese in the textile trade,



dental services and the many restaurants before World War II? It is hoped that Prof. Shukri will be able to enlighten us on some of these questions.

Harbour and seaside Mosque at Beruwala



The drive along the southern crescent of the bay leads the visitor along an ancient road with remnants of old houses of the Dutch period, a Christian Church of St. Lazarus, dated 1901 and of course, the Mosque of high

antiquarian value at the very tip of the bay, where the breakwater begins. This mosque stands majestically on a kabook hill and provides a near 360 degree panorama which includes sea and land, and especially the old harbour, which could have moored the many hundred ships of the Chinese fleet in 1402 and after.

