



**RANDOM OBSERVATIONS ON BENGALURU: 890 CE – 1854**

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1. The earliest reference to Bengaluru dates back to 890 CE. An inscription refers to the “Battle of Bengaluru”. This perhaps signifies that Bengaluru could have been a village/town/market of some significance.
2. The next reference to Bengaluru is to be found in an inscription of 1628 CE, wherein there is specific reference to “Bengalur *pete*”; it mentions, “all the people of Bengalur *pete* entered into the following agreement.” (Epigraphia Carnatica Vol. 9, Bangalore Taluq Inscription Number 1).
3. From here we move to B.L. Rice’s [Gazetteer](#) (pp. 20-26, 1897), who provides a fairly detailed history of pre-colonial Bengaluru. It is mentioned here that Kempegowda shifted Bengaluru in 1537 from a location near Kodigehalli (North-West of Hebbal) – which Rice mentions as “old Bangalore” – to a new location, “Bengaluru” where he constructs a mud-fort (Bengaluru fort).

From this, is it possible to infer that the inscription of 890 CE refers to “old Bengaluru”, and the inscription of 1628 specifically refers to the “new” (Bengaluru *pete*), thereby differentiating it from the “old Bengaluru” (Kodigehalli)?

4. Soon after 1537, Achyut Raya of the Vijaynagar Empire grants Kempegowda the following places: Old Bengaluru, Vartur, Yelahanka, Bevur (Begur), Halasur (Ulsoor), Tengeri (Kengeri), Talgattapur, Jigani, Kumbalgod, Kanalli (Kanahalli), Banavar (near Hesaraghatta), and Hesaraghatta.

These areas correspond with the district or *pargana* of Bangalore that comes into usage in later periods.

5. Rice says that in 1758, “the fort *and district* of Bangalore” was conferred to Hyder Ali as a *jagir*.
6. In 1791, Bangalore was taken from Tipu Sultan by the British under Lord Cornwallis. The **siege** maps of 1791 are interesting to examine ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).

The British breach the *pete* from the north (Yelahanka gate, Fakir’s tope) and set up their artillery batteries to fire on the fort.

Four batteries are mentioned on the map: battery of 10 guns to take off the defences; enfilading battery; breaching batteries; mortar batteries.

The map (3) also shows the water supply to the fort is drawn from a tank to its south (Karanji kere).

The connection between the *pete* and the fort is only through a narrow street that is flanked on both sides by mosques.

The entrance to the fort from the *pete* is through the Delhi gate.

7. Another old map (not a siege map) of Bangalore in 1791 (4) provides location of all the individual markets within the *pete*.

The *pete* is fortified by a thick (about 150-200 feet) “Hedge of *Segekay*” (*shikai/shikakai* or soap nut trees have thorns and are difficult to pass through). Dense hedge fortifications were used in medieval times. These natural barriers, often referred to as “hedge walls” were created by planting dense, thorny bushes and trees closely together.



Here is an interesting [extract](#) [p. 132-133] on hedges in Bengaluru:

*“When the army had laid several days before Bangalore, it was determined to attempt the capture of the pettah or town, which was of considerable extent. It was surrounded by a wall and turrets of no great strength; but there was a wide and deep ditch, whilst the gate was covered by what is called in the East a “bound-hedge,” or “broad, strong belt of planting, chiefly the bamboo tree, the prickly pear, and such other trees and shrubs as form the choicest fence.” These “bound- hedges” were found encircling most forts and villages; the large forts generally having one “that inclosed a circuit of several miles, as a place of refuge for the inhabitants of the surrounding country against the incursions of*

horse.” *The bound-hedge at Bangalore, formed of bamboos, aloes [probably shikakai as in map [4], and the prickly pear, was a great impediment to a storming party.”*

Francis Buchanan in his [Journey](#) mentions that *Shicai* was exported from Bangalore (Vol. 1, p. 199).

*Opuntia*, commonly called the *prickly pear* cactus.



In a volume of [despatches](#), 1797-1805, there is mention of a bamboo hedge “thirty to forty feet high, and twenty broad” and “hedges to be cut down in Arrekerry [Arekere]”.

8. “On the death of Tipu in 1799 *the District* (of Bangalore) was included by the treaty of Seringapatam in territory of the Mysore Raja.”
9. Next in sequence is the **survey map of Bengaluru** [\(5\)](#) of 1800 (end of the pre-colonial period and beginning of colonial intervention in the state of Mysore), less referred to but provides interesting information. The map was prepared under the directions of Colin Mackenzie.

It is map of the boundaries of the *purgunna* (pargana) of Bangalore. Pargana is essentially an administrative unit and used by the Mughals and adopted by Hyder/Tipu. The head of a pargana was an *amil* or *amildar*. Within the pargana is the *cusba* (*kasba*), within which is the *pete* and fort.

The *pargana* also has smaller units called *samoot* (*samut*) including Yelahanka, Jiggenny (Jigani) and Kengeri.

Around the *kasba* is a “Bound Hedge” of bamboo. There were possible entry points (gates) along arterial roads at Muddawalla (Madivala), Halsoor (Ulsoor) and Yesmunjapur (Yeshwantpur). There must have been one south of Yelahanka too along the road from Deonahully (Devanahalli).

The entire district itself is surrounded by a green belt or “Bamboo Jungle” – this is mentioned along the south-west boundary of the district – just above the RAMGHERRY.

The connection of the bamboo hedges to present-day “**green belt**” demarcated in Bangalore’s Metropolitan Region planning could be an interesting topic of study.

The “Bamboo Jungle” seems sparse on the eastern fringe of Bengaluru District, and the region was chosen by the British for occupation as cantonment.

Adjoining many of the lakes are paddy (or perhaps sugar cane) cultivations – this tiled pattern to indicate paddy cultivation was used in an earlier map ([1](#)). It is interesting to consider a comment made by Francis Buchanan in his [Journey](#) (Vol. 1, p. 49):

*“There are, indeed, some small reservoirs; but the water contained Reservoirs. in these, is destined merely to supply the cattle with drink. A small reservoir of this kind in the Karnataca language is called Cuttay [katte], as the large ones for watering the lands are called Carays [kere]. They are both formed exactly in the same manner, by building a mound or dam, of earth and stone, across a hollow ground. Large reservoirs, or Carays, might no doubt be formed everywhere in a hilly country; but where there is not a sufficient extent of level land with a good soil for the cultivation of rice, the expense of such works would far exceed the profits.”*

The *Pargana* of Bangalore in this map corresponds to present-day Bangalore Urban District. The adjoining parganas including Anekal, Devanahalli, Doddaballapur are now included in Bangalore Rural District.

It is interesting to observe that a longer view of the map indicates that the *kasba* actually consists of more greenery than the area between the *kasba* and the outer “Bamboo Jungle”.

Large portions of this area seem devoid of vegetation, tanks and villages except along arterial roads. This, however, is because the area may not have been surveyed at this time.

10. The British cantonment at Bangalore was established in 1809 [Rice, p. 26]. The earliest map of the cantonment was drawn in 1843 ([6](#)).

The map shows drill grounds for the native infantry and the “Native Infantry Hutting Ground”. Hutting in military parlance [means](#), “a wooden or metal structure for the temporary housing of troops.”

There is also a ground for “Dragoon Horselines” and “European Dragoon Barracks” with an adjacent “Riding School”. Dragoons were originally a type of mounted infantry. They used horses to move around, but got off the horses to fight on foot. They were also used as cavalry and were trained to fight with swords on horseback ([ref](#)).

Additionally, there is a “Light Dragoon Drill Ground” in the south-east portion of the cantonment and a “Race Course” close by. This is the Old Race Course of Bangalore (ORC Road around present-day Austin Town).

Ulsoor Tank and Sampangi Tank (now gone) are within the cantonment while two large tanks (both gone) are outside its limits, namely, Sunnakal Tank (now Wilson Garden, Shantinagar Bus Stand) and Koramangala Tank (around/within NIANP/NDRI).

A road can now be seen passing between the fort and *pete*, the connecting passage having been severed.

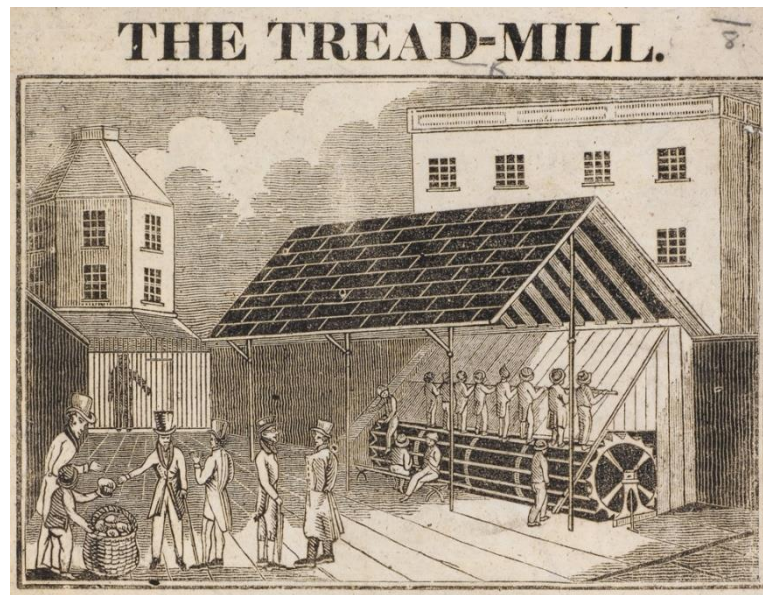
A close reading of the map indicates that the bamboo/*shikai* hedge surrounding the *pete* has later developed into Mysore Road and KG Road.

Siddikatte, which we find in Map [\(4\)](#) is present-day K.R. Market.

11. A map from 1854 [\(7\)](#) shows significant development within the cantonment in just 11 years. Some of the added notable buildings are the “**Arrack Godown**” (around present-day Mayo Hall), the Arab Stables (present-day Johnson market), and a “**Thug Jail**” (near present-day Good Shepherd school).

Just outside the periphery of the cantonment, at the corner of Sampangi Tank (present-day Hudson Circle), a building is marked as “**Tread Mill**”. It is possibly a gaol (jail) where there may have been a “penal treadmill”.

*“A penal treadmill (penal treadwheel or everlasting staircase) was a treadwheel or treadmill with steps set into two cast iron wheels. These drove a shaft that could be used to mill corn, pump water, or connect to a large fan for resistance. Penal treadmills were used in prisons during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in both Britain and the United States. In early Victorian Britain the treadmill was used as a method of exerting hard labour, a form of punishment prescribed in the prisoner's sentence.” [\(8\)](#)*



It is also noteworthy that regular police under Act V of 1861 were introduced in Bangalore in 1866 (9). The tread mill could have been a precursor to the implementation of the Act.

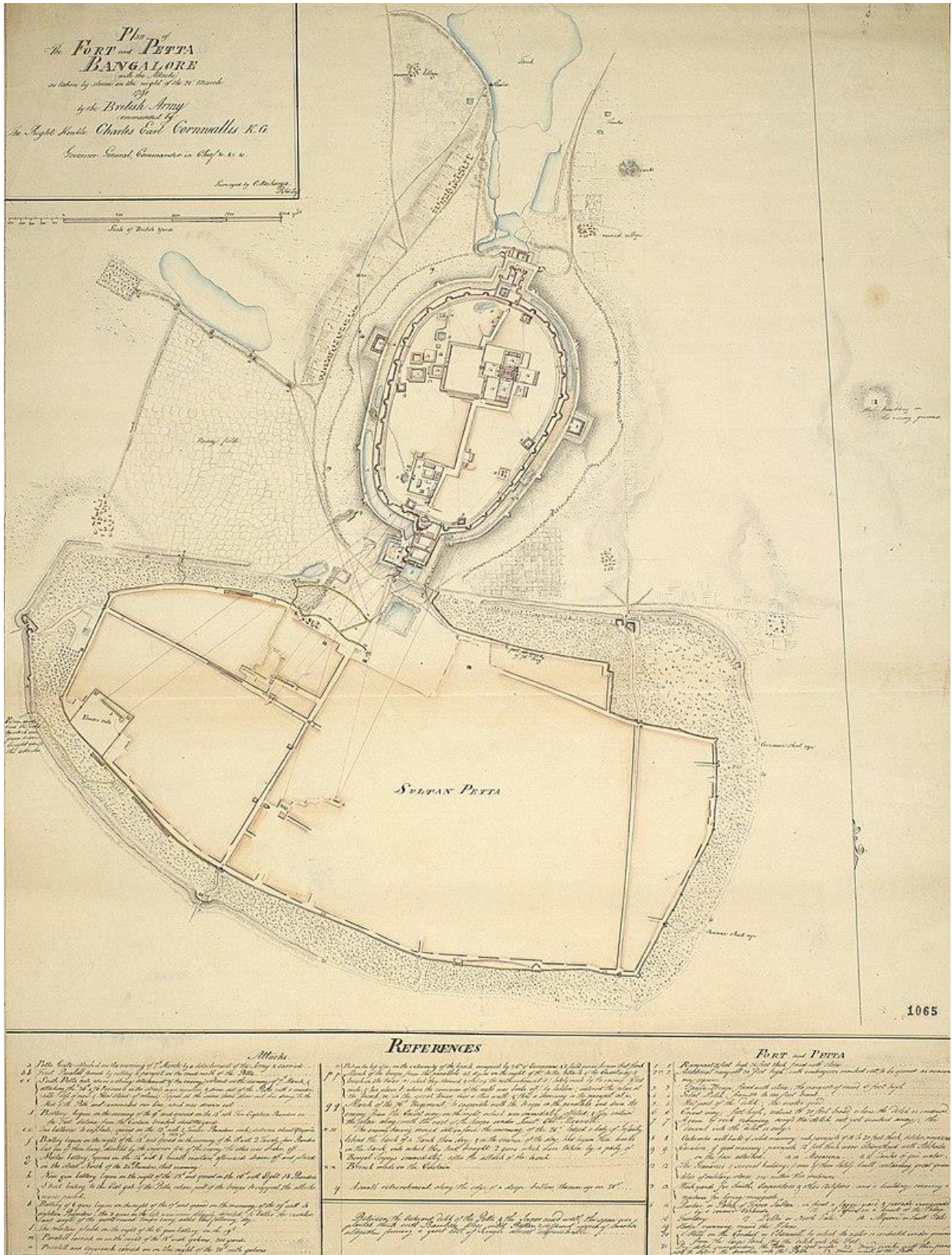
Outside the perimeter of the cantonment was situated Coramungalum (Koramangala) Tank, which irrigated sugarcane fields to its southwest at Coramungalum.

There is a large piece of land on the western perimeter of Coramungalum Tank (now part of NIANP) which is marked with the name "Mr. Morrison's".

Finally, the 1854 map clearly and fully delineates the boundary of the cantonment.

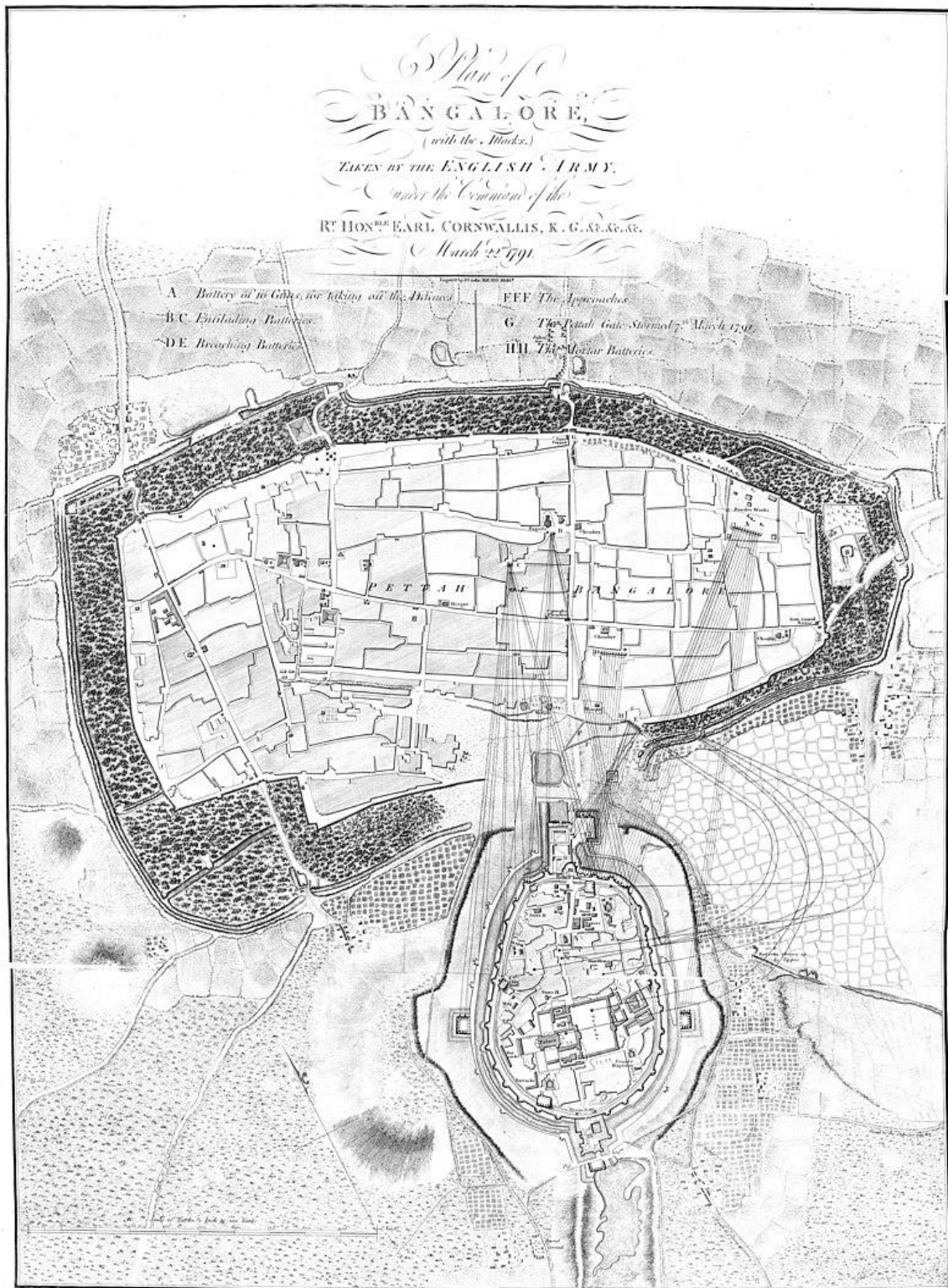
12. There are other old maps that could be used for a further study of Bangalore's development. This short paper examined only a few old maps of Bangalore.





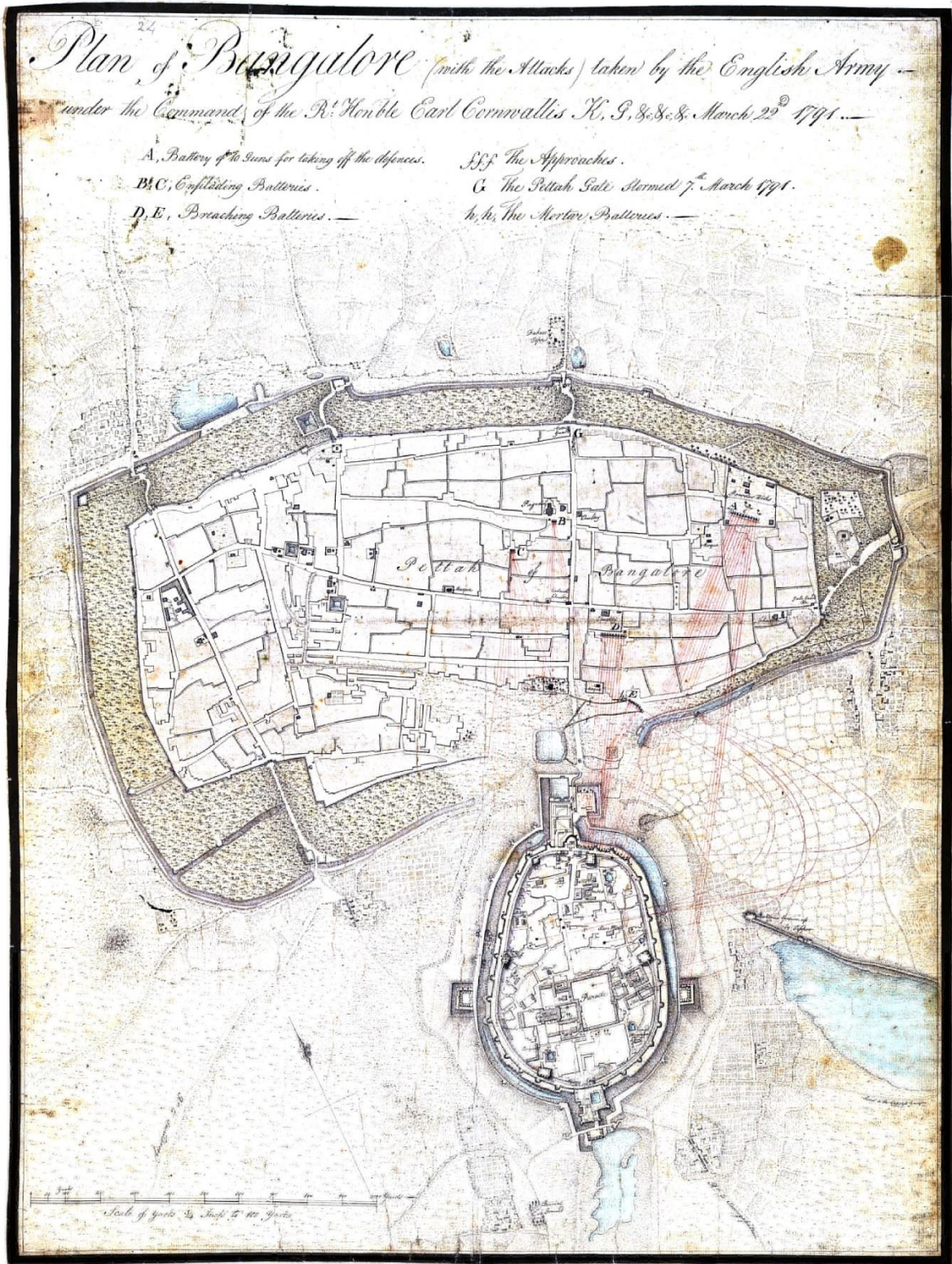
Map (1): Siege Map of Bangalore





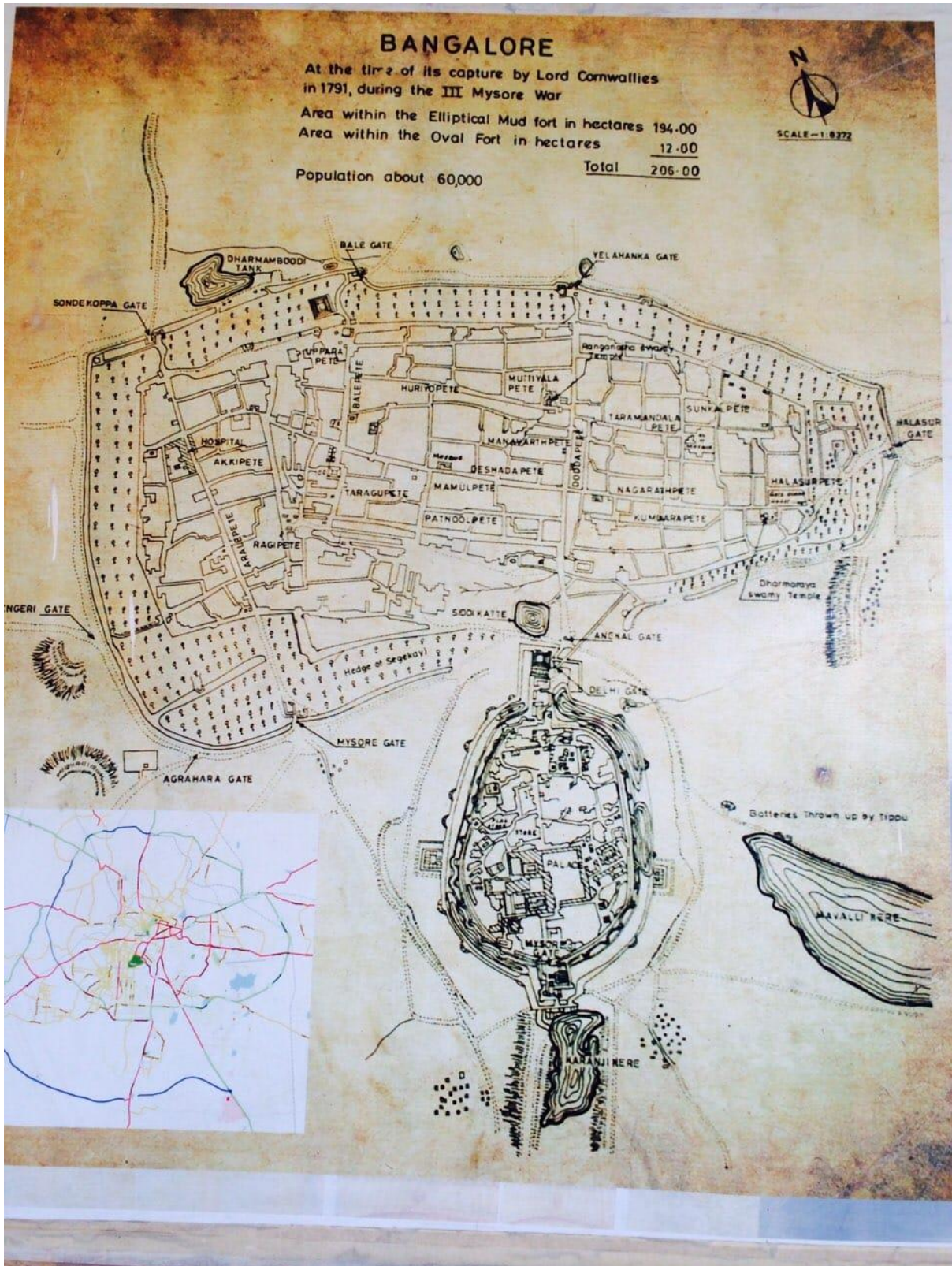
Map (2): Siege Map of Bangalore





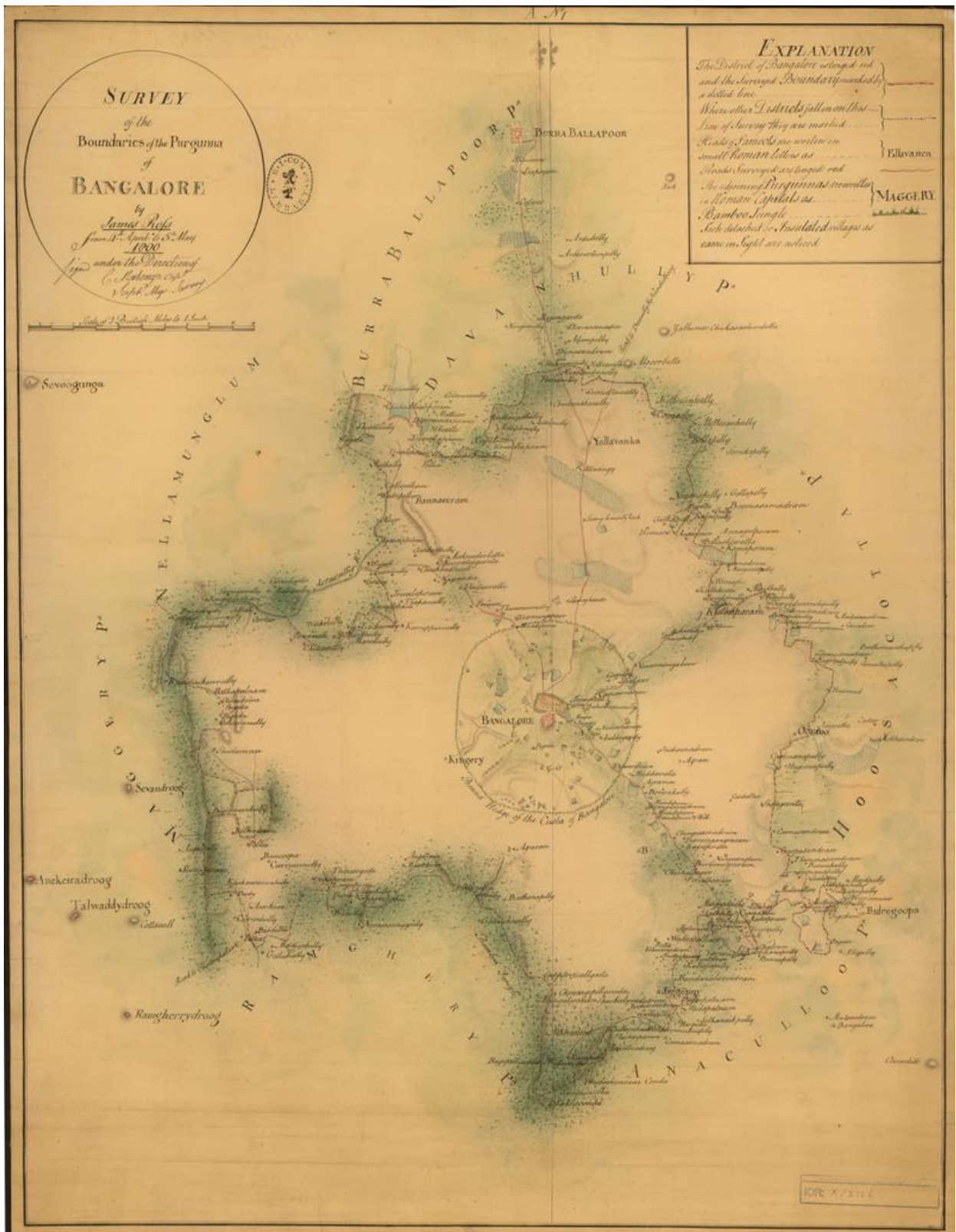
Map (3): Siege Map of Bangalore





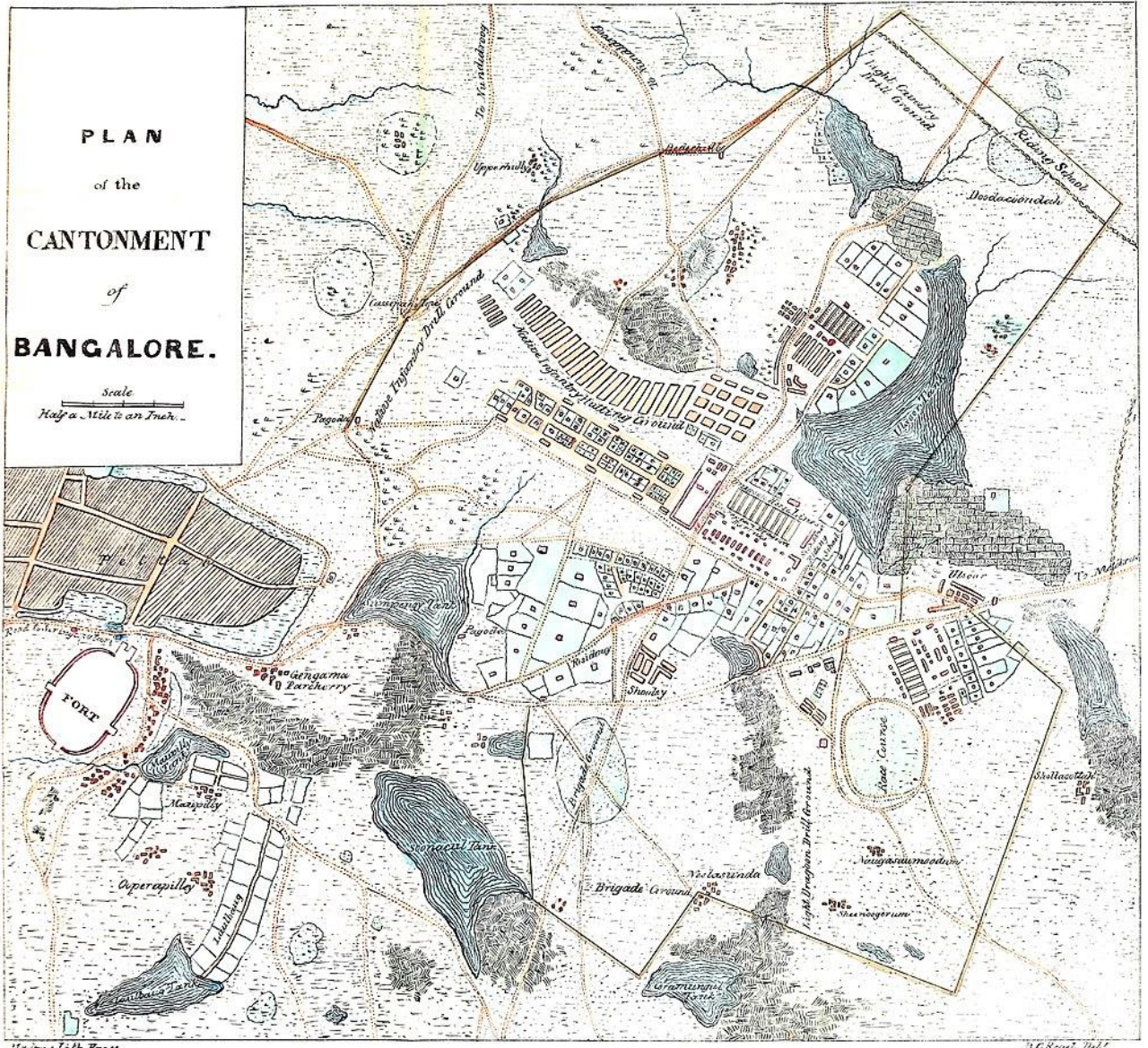
Map (4): Map of Bangalore *pete* with specific markets





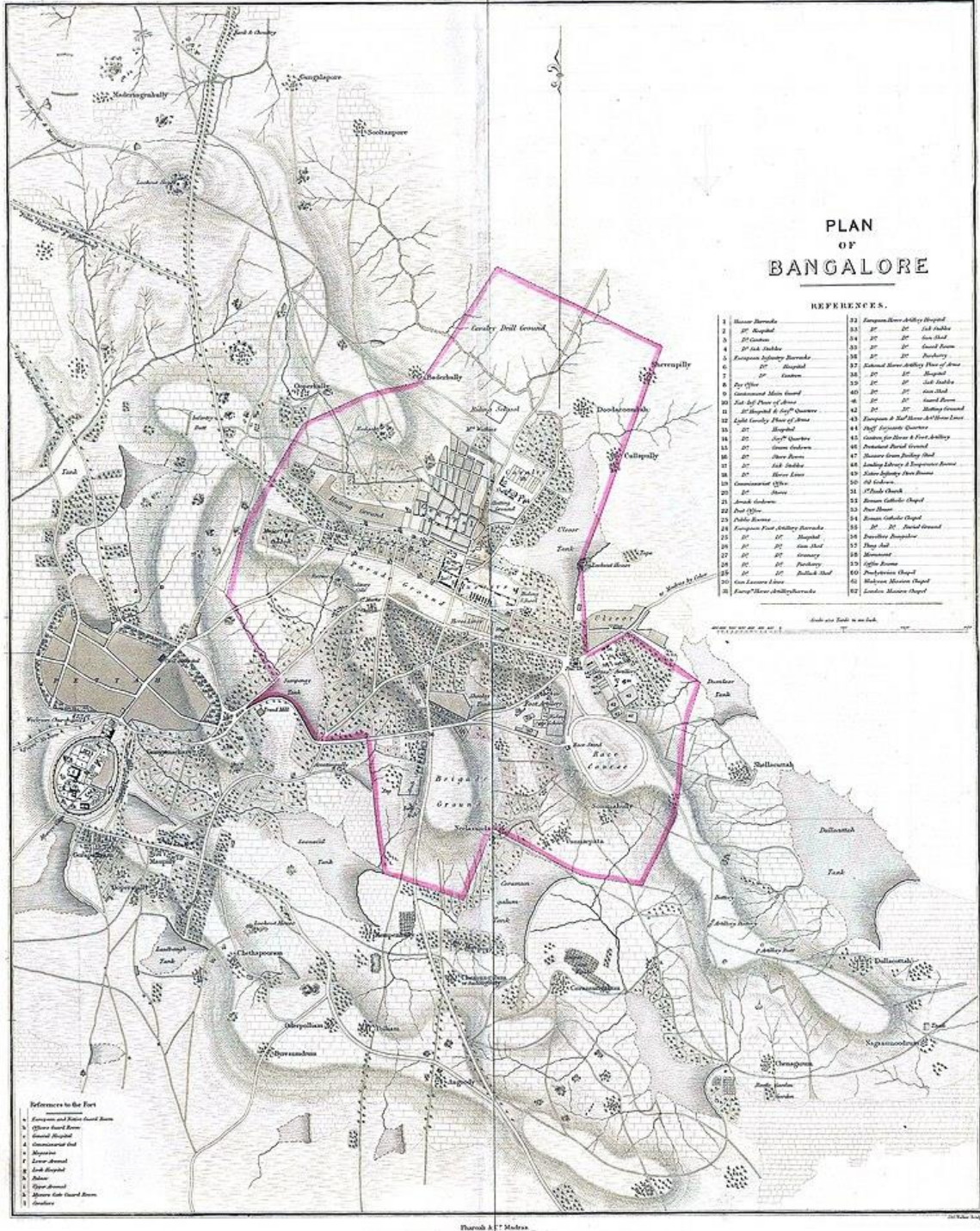
Map (5): Pargana of Bangalore





Map (6): Map of Bangalore Cantonment, 1843.





Map (7): Plan of Bangalore, 1854.

Follow the hyperlinks to the maps for enlargeable versions.