

## THE INTRIGUING TALES OF MELAWATI HILL

Melawati Hill or *Bukit Melawati* has a colourful past that is steeped in history and preserved by time. During the reign of Sultan Ibrahim, the second Sultan of Selangor (1778-1826), a fort was built on this very hill to defend the state against the Dutch invasion. Nevertheless, in 1784 a brutal fight ensued and the Dutch conquered Kuala Selangor and with it Melawati Hill.





*The Hundred Steps leading to Batu Buruk docks*



*Poisoned Well at Melawati Hill*

In the heat of battle, the fort collapsed but was reconstructed and renamed Fort Altingsburg, in honour of the Dutch Governor, General Alting. Sultan Ibrahim and his men retreated to safety but the desire to reclaim their land burned fiercely in their hearts. In 1785, the Sultan spearheaded an attack against the Dutch and reclaimed the fort. Alas, such victory only signified the beginning of more battles to come. The fort continued to serve as a battleground in several other wars involving different forces that tried to gain control of this stronghold until the British intervention in 1874.

Today, Melawati Hill is a popular tourist attraction for those who want to revel in its rich and intriguing past. The silent figure of the Altingsburg Lighthouse, perched on the summit of the hill offers a commanding view of sea and land. Still in working condition, the lighthouse is out of bounds to the public. Nevertheless, its sheer magnificence is a sight to behold. Next to it are the ruins of the first fort. An outer wall of the fort with three original cannons still overlooks the sea. Part of the fort's original gates remain intact as is the courtyard with the executioner's stone block known as *Batu Hampar* that was used to behead criminals. Legend has it a girl residing in the fort, caught committing adultery was executed at the stone and her blood was then sprinkled around the fort as a warning to anyone else who would defy the law.

Leading up to the courtyard are the remains of the "Hundred Steps", aptly named after the number of terraces leading down to the Batu Buruk docks. In the old days, travellers and merchants had to pass through these steps before heading towards the markets in Kuala Selangor. Other attractions at Melawati Hill include the Poisoned Well used to execute traitors. Filled with a lethal mixture of latex and juice from bamboo shoots, many infidels, met their doom by being slowly lowered into this well.

In addition to these intriguing places, tourists can also visit the Kuala Selangor Museum and the Royal Mausoleum where the first three Sultans of Selangor were laid to rest. A *Penggawa* or Chief Cannon, ceremonially draped in yellow cloth, sits in the mausoleum. It was discovered in 1966 in the Buluh River, about 19 kilometres from Kuala Selangor and was originally known as *Petai Boga*. Melawati Hill is located in Kuala Selangor, 75 kilometres northwest of Kuala Lumpur.



*The Altingsburg Lighthouse*



*Batu Hampar, the executioner's stone*