

Sir Hector's Follies

It is normally stated that the **Fyrish Monument** was built by General Sir Hector Munro of Novar (1727 – 1806) in the 1780s on the proceeds of his prize monies and pensions from his various Indian campaigns. The tradition runs that this was an early work creation scheme for local people who were suffering the effects of food shortage and unemployment. (There is the rather tall story that he personally rolled stones down from the summit overnight to create additional employment!) And it is said to be based on the gates of the coastal fortress of 'Nepapatuam', which he captured in 1781 from the Dutch and their Indian allies. The Highland Archives have Novar Estate papers which refer to construction in 1792. (See Evanton Oral History website).

The monument, a Listed Building (category B) from 1971, was originally painted white according to one early source (although this may be because it so appears when the sun shines on it). Strangely the outlying pillars at each end are several metres out of alignment with the main monument. 2 smaller monuments, with straight sides, sit on Meann Cnoc and Creag Ruadh, which are now clearly visible from the road (pictures).



Monument on Creag Ruadh



Monument on Meann Cnoc ('Little Fyrish')

The poet Robert Southey, touring the Highlands in 1819, in conjunction with Thomas Telford, wrote of "some odd edifices on the summits which he (Sir Hector) is said to have designed as imitations of the **hillforts** in India." An Indian hillfort is very different from a city gate. There is no evidence of any special gates for Negapatuam itself, and the fortress was of distinctly European design. It would seem that Southey may well have been right and that the monument's association with Negapatuam (however spelt) needs to be loosened.



**Dutch engraving showing
Nagapatnam c. 1680**

Sir Hector named some of the fields of his newly laid-out estate after his various Indian campaigns e.g. Buxar (a great victory) and Negapatnam (a successful 6-day siege) – leaving out Conjeeveram, which was a near disaster. The 1777 Estate plan shows further Indian style temples.

Negapatnam is actually a mis-spelling of Nagapatnam or Nagapattinam, the capital of the eponymous province in Tamil Nadu of some 92,000 people; some 6000 lost their lives in the 2004 tsunami. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xs6bArKadpw>

One of Sir Hector's sons, Alexander, was eaten by a shark, another, Hugh, was killed by a tiger in 1792 while hunting on Saugor Island, off the coast of Bengal; as commemorated in this piece of Staffordshire pottery.



'The Death of Munrow'

Adrian Clark, Nov 2009 (2014)