



1

Lake Kigere

The Fort Portal area is associated with sites that have long had a spiritual importance for its people. Near Lake Kigere is a large footprint believed to belong to one of the last kings of the ancient Batembuzi dynasty, thought to be giants!

Open to the public, by appointment with the local community.



2

Amabere ga Nyinamwiru cave and stalactites

The Amabere site, with its breast-like stalactites in a cave and its magnificent water fall, is named after King Bukuku's daughter and translates as Nyinamwiru's breasts. King Bukuku belonged to the ancient Batembuzi dynasty, believed to be demi-gods by their subjects, often disappearing underground. The princess was a beautiful young woman with a strong personality. She refused to marry the man her father had chosen. An infuriated King ordered that her breasts be cut off because of her disobedience, thus precluding her marriage and nurturing children. It is believed that the stalactites are her breasts oozing milk.

Open to the public - Entry fee payable.



3

Ibaale - "the rock"

Four kilometres from town on the Kamwenge road is the "Ibaale". This is an ancestral place of worship. Its footprints and other marks on its flat top are, according to legend, a reminder of the passage of gods in the area.

Open to the public.



4

Fort Gerry and Tooro Golf Club

When the British arrived in the region, defending Tooro against the Bunyoro Kingdom's troops was a first priority. Fort Gerry was built by Lord Lugard in 1893 and named after Sir Gerald Portal, a British colonial official after whom the town was named in 1900. Lugard brought Nubian soldiers for the task - whose descendants still live in Fort Portal. The defensive ditches of Fort Gerry can still be found around the Tooro Golf Club House. The golf course was inaugurated in 1914, for the handful of British administrators then living in and around town.

Can be visited with permission of the Tooro Golf Club.



5

Kabarole Hospital

A missionary presence was quickly established in Fort Portal, from 1894, and just two years later King Kasagama Kyebambe III was the first Tooro King to be baptised. The missionaries were not solely concerned with spiritual matters however, and the Church Missionary Society built Kabarole Hospital in 1903. It is the second-oldest Western-type medical facility in the country, after Mengo hospital in Kampala.

Open to the public.



6

Kyebambe girls' school

The School was founded in 1910 and named after the King of Tooro, Kasagama Kyebambe III, who had invited the Church Missionary Society to come and teach his people. The school started as a mixed sex primary school. One of its first buildings, now a dormitory, is over 100 years old and provides a good example of early colonial architecture in the town.

Not open to the public - grounds open with permission of school administration.



7a

The Karuzika - the Royal Palace

King Kyebambe first built a two-storey palace on Kabarole Hill overlooking the town in 1910. The hill was said to be infested by spirits. The recently baptised King showed victory over these spirits by establishing his palace there (Kabarole means "let them see"). The current circular structure was built in 1964 for Kyebambe's son and successor, Rukidi III, and was opened by Britain's Princess Margaret in 1965. The palace or Karuzika was ransacked when Uganda's traditional kingdoms were abolished in 1966, then rebuilt after their restoration in 1993.

Can be partly visited - enquire at the palace



7b

Akaswa

The man-made Akaswa mount marks the place where the fire symbolising the continuity of the Tooro dynasty was buried in King Kyebambe's reign. The mount is also the spot where the annual celebrations of the King's coronation start.



8

Karambi Tombs

The Royal Tombs comprise of three main mausoleums: from I to r, for Kings Kasagama Kyebambe III (+1928), George Kamurasi Rukidi III (+1965) and Olimi Kaboyo VII (+ 1995) that also contain the kings' regalia. Across the pathway are the tombs of various members of the royal family.

Open to the public - contact the caretaker on site.



9

Rwengoma Palace

Built in 1909 by King Kyebambe to accommodate his mother Victoria Kahinju, this imposing structure was later occupied by King Kyebambe's son. A good example of early colonial architecture adapted by the local elite.

Open with caretaker's permission.



10

Kabahango Palace

Kabahango palace was built in 1928 and inaugurated in 1932. It is said that Sir George Rukidi III, (grandfather to the current king) the then Omukama (King) of Tooro had been impressed by Theodora Bacwa whom he had seen in a cultural competition, and had made her his second queen. The palace was built for her. The building stands on Kabahango hill, named after the palace.

Grounds accessible - house not open to the public.



11

Mucwa Chambers - Tooro's Parliament

The foundation stone for this impressive structure (reflecting the might of the Kingdom at the time) was laid in 1964. Housing the Kingdom's offices and Parliament, the Mucwa Chambers were opened by King Olimi Kaboyo VII in 1966, shortly before the Kingdom was abolished by the Uganda Government.

Open to the public.



12

Kitumba Mosque

This first mosque in the Kabarole region made of durable materials was built in 1922. It was established by Abdullai Gatunga, formerly working in the Tooro Kingdom palace, and Aziz Kasiye, a renowned Muslim missionary from Buganda. Aziz's missionary work spread to parts of the Congo where he established friendship with new converts who offered timber and labour to help in the construction of the Kitumba mosque, to replace an earlier grass thatched one, built in the 1890s.

Open to the public with imam's permission.

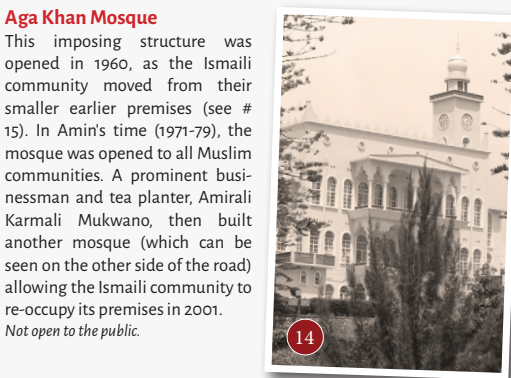


13

St John's Cathedral

The idea of constructing a cathedral came from Aberi Kakomya, whose statue can be found in the gardens along Kaseke Road. Aberi was born in 1877 and became an active preacher at the age of 30. He later studied theology and rose in the church hierarchy. He personally supervised the construction of this Anglican cathedral, which started in 1937 and was completed in 1939. Aberi was also involved in the first translation of the Bible and the liturgy into Runyoro/Rotooro.

Open to the public with permission.



14

Aga Khan Mosque

This imposing structure was opened in 1960, as the Ismaili community moved from their smaller earlier premises (see # 15). In Amin's time (1971-79), the mosque was opened to all Muslim communities. A prominent businessman and tea planter, Amiri Karmali Mukwano, then built another mosque (which can be seen on the other side of the road) allowing the Ismaili community to re-occupy its premises in 2001.

Not open to the public.



18

St Leo's College

Established in the 1920s, St. Leo's College was the first Roman Catholic-founded secondary school in the region. The college was first opened on the site now occupied by St. Mary's Seminary, close to Virika Cathedral (see # 16). Moved to the current buildings in the early 1960s, these offer a fine example of the confident post-colonial architecture style of the time.

Open to the public with permission from the school administration.



16

Virika Cathedral

A severe earthquake devastated Fort Portal in 1966, destroying the old Roman Catholic Cathedral. This was replaced by the current structure, whose first stone was laid the following year, in 1967. The Cathedral of our Lady of Snows at Virika is on the site of the first Catholic presence in Fort Portal, and where the first Catholic-founded school was established at the turn of the 20th century.

Open to the public.



17

Nyakasura School

The school was initiated in 1926 by a retired Scottish army officer, Ernest Calwell. Calwell had taught at the elite King's College Budo near Kampala until he came to Tooro where King Kyebambe III gave him land to start a similar school in Western Uganda. Commander Calwell built the school along British public school lines, including the country's first cricket pitch. The School was also the first to produce electricity, thanks to a small dam built in 1930. Calwell also had the students wear kilts as part of the school uniform, as can still be seen today!

Open to the public with permission from the school administration.



22

The Banks

With prosperity came the banks, the first one opened in 1909.

Open to the public for banking purposes.



19

Canon Apollo College Chapel

Canon Apollo Teachers' College is also among the first educational establishments in Fort Portal. Many of its early buildings were destroyed by an earthquake. The current chapel, probably built in 1961 with volcanic rocks, is of a striking design.

Open to the public with permission.



23

Asian Housing

The centre of town was racially segregated in the colonial period, as were other towns in Uganda. An Asian quarter - where Fort Portal's main traders lived - is still evident with residences from 1940-1960, all along the Mugurusi Road loop. The residences along Mugurusi Road are not open to the public, except for DAJ guest house, close to Stanbic Bank.



24

Local Government Offices

Currently the seat of the district administration, this grand building was erected in 1952 as the administrative centre for Uganda's Western Region. It was subsequently damaged in an earthquake but retains its imposing facade.

Open to the public.



20

Shops along Lugard Road

As in other colonial-era towns, much of the trade was dominated by migrants from the Indian sub-continent. The first Asian shops were built in the 1920s and the best examples can still be found along Lugard Road.

Open to the public.



21

The Bookshop

Probably built in 1958. Note the unique bow windows.

Open to the public.

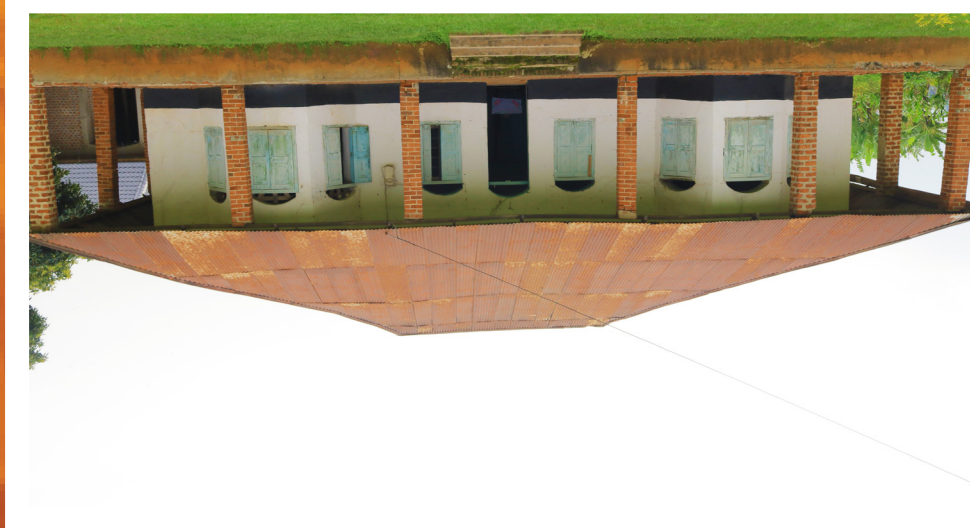
"Mother Eucalyptus" trees

Queen Elizabeth of England (the current Queen's mother) first visited Uganda in 1925 when, as the young Duchess of York, she came with her husband, the Duke of York (later King George VI), on a hunting safari. In the course of the trip, 40 eucalyptus trees were planted by the visitors, as well as by local dignitaries, to commemorate the Duke's and Duchess's visit to the forest reserve created three years previously. Eucalyptus trees have been known to survive for 120 years.

The trees can be seen at the Tooro Botanical Gardens - open to the public.



25



A MAP OF FORT PORTALS HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND SITES



Ambasáid na hÉireann
Embassy of Ireland

This map has been created to bring Fort Portal's history to life as you walk down the street. It has been designed by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, with support from the Embassy of Ireland.

Please also check out our other resources:

- Uganda's Built Heritage mobile app (available on Googleplay and Apple App Store)
- "Beyond the Reeds and Bricks - Historical Sites and Buildings in Kampala, Jinja and Entebbe" - a photo book available from CCFU, Aristoc Bookshop, Kardamom & Koffee, and the Airport Bookshop.
- Maps of Historical Buildings and Sites in Kampala, Jinja and Entebbe - available from CCFU and via CCFU's website.

For more information, contact

The Cross-Cultural
Foundation of Uganda

Makerere Hill, Off Bativa Rd,
PO. Box 25517, Kampala, Uganda
Tel. +256-393 294675/7
ccfu@crossculturalfoundation.or.ug
www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug



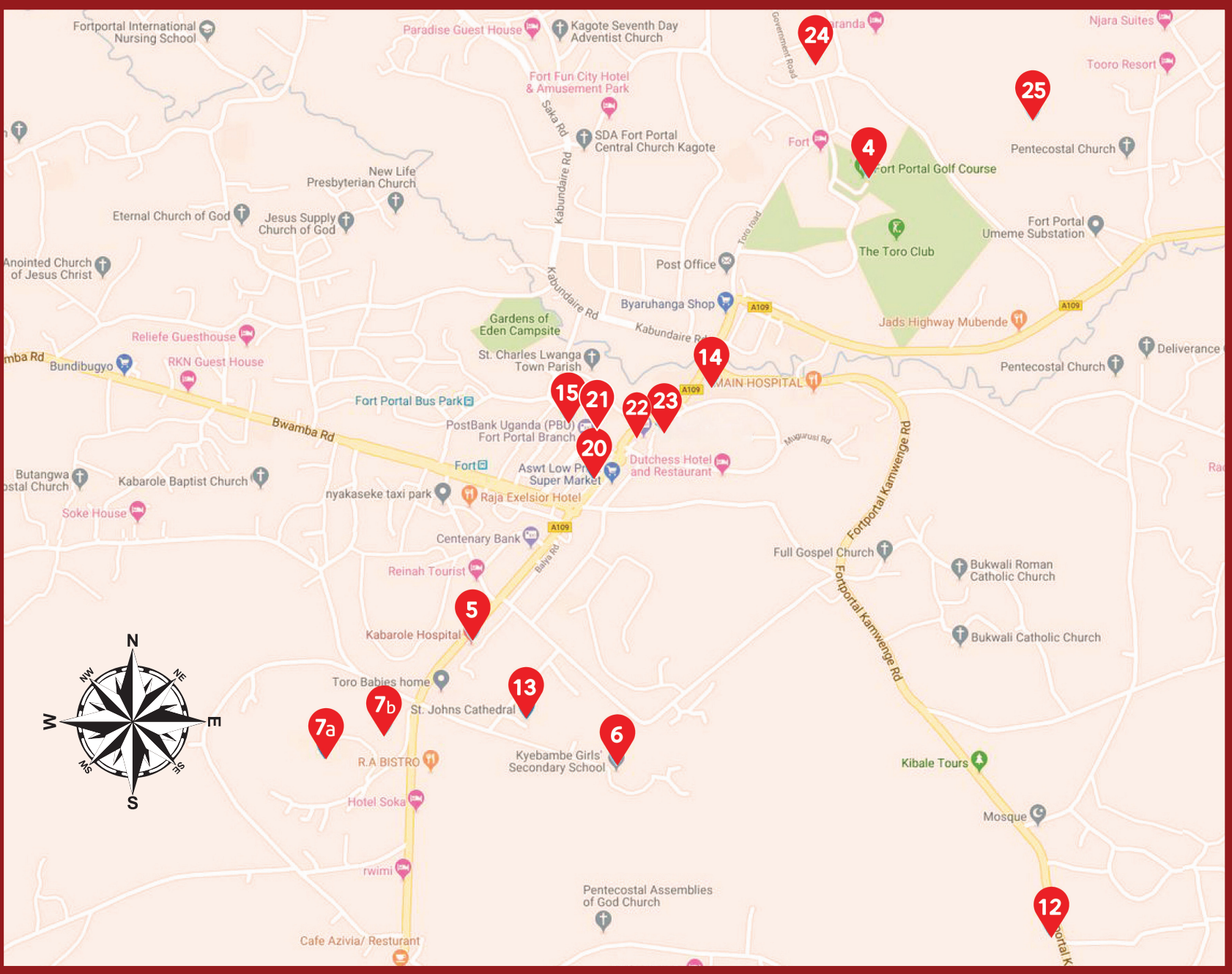
CCFU_NGO



CCFU NGO

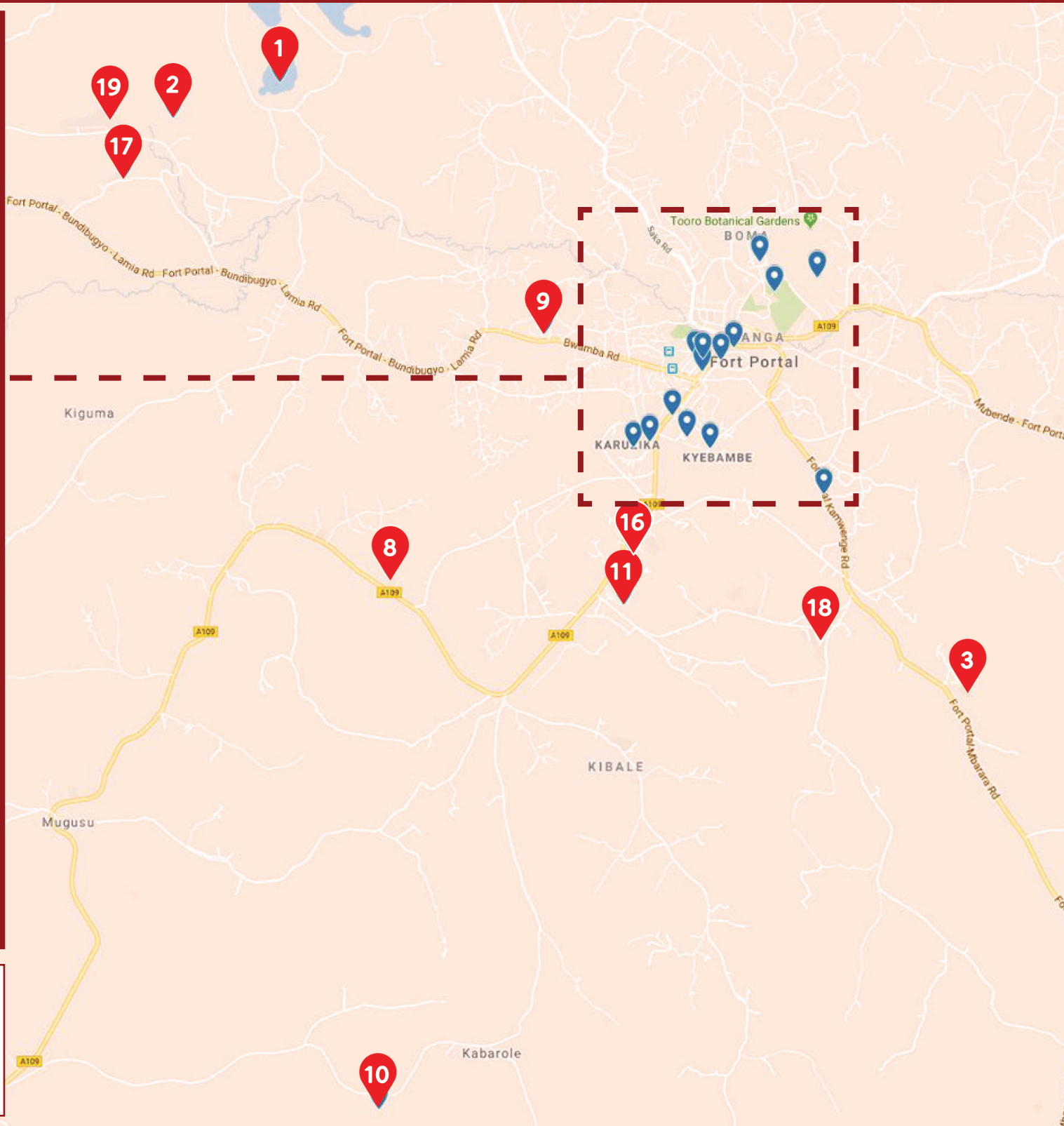
This map was created with the financial support of the Embassy of Ireland. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Embassy of Ireland.

A Journey Through Fort Portal's History



KEY

- Historical Buildings and Sites
- Vegetation/Gardens
- Main Roads
- Major Highways



Fort Portal - Western Uganda's Tourism City



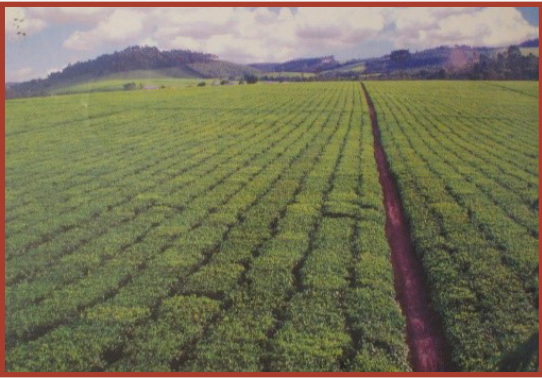
Then and now: Mpanga market, some years ago, still in existence across the road from the Gardens Restaurant, but recently rebuilt and expanded.

An attractive, growing city, close to the Rwenzori mountain range, Fort Portal is the seat of Tooro Kingdom.

Fort Portal is steeped in history. Its first known structure was one of a series of forts built by the British colonialist Lord Lugard in 1891-93 to help defend his ally the Tooro King, Daudi Kyebambe Kasagama, against incursions by the British arch-foe, King Kabalega of neighbouring Bunyoro. The Fort Portal fortress was then known as Fort Gerry, named after a colonial official at the time, Sir Gerald Portal.

In the early years, the town grew slowly, but Mpanga market is already mentioned by travellers in 1913. Fort Portal was then quite isolated and travellers from Kampala would reach it by first travelling to Masindi and Lake Albert. Still, Fort Portal was acquiring a familiar colonial pattern: the European administrative centre and quarters on one hill (the Boma), with the King's palace on another (Kabarole) and the commercial centre in-between.

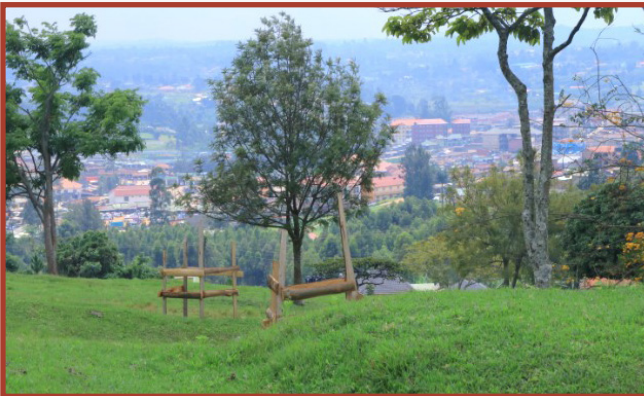
The history of the town was intimately linked to that of the Tooro Kingdom, until 1966, when the then President of Uganda (Milton Obote) abolished all traditional cultural institutions in the country. By then the Kingdom had marked its presence with imposing structures,



including the King's palace and the Mucwa, which houses the Kingdom's Parliament.

Economic prosperity was elusive for some time with early attempts at coffee growing not bearing much success, until tea was introduced in the 1920s. This was mostly grown on land leased to British settlers at the turn of the 20th century. With the settlers came other amenities: the first bank, the first hotel (The Mountains of the Moon in 1928) and the indispensable golf course! Communications improved: the road to Kampala via Mubende was opened in 1930.

The 1929 Wall Street crash however saw half the planters going bankrupt, with many turning away from tea to the ivory and rhino horn trade. Tea growing later recovered and the first tea factory was functioning in 1939. Ugandan smallholder tea farmers also joined the industry in the 1960s. In 1972, Amin nationalised all British assets and the tea plantations went into State ownership, heralding a long period of decline, until private companies took over in the 1990s. This period of decline led to stagnation in town, with few new structures being built until the 1990s. This has provided Fort Portal an opportunity to preserve its built heritage, a source of its distinct identity and of potential income from cultural tourism. Let us safeguard it!



Then and now: Fort Portal seen from the palace at the time of King Rukidi's reign (1928-1965) and in 2019: a transformed landscape!