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Archaeological studies at the outwork of Rakvere castle, with emphasis on the Trojan hill

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The outwork of Rakvere castle has been overshadowed by other, better known examples of Tallinn, Narva, Kuressaare and Tartu. However, numerous small-scale studies conducted over the decades provide valuable data to understand the formation of the outwork. The fortifications around the Rakvere castle form an exception among the Late Medieval and Early Modern Age fortresses as it does not have a regular outwork and it follows mostly the natural features of Vallimägi esker. The constructions date from the 16th century and not from the high time period of building earthworks in the late 17th and 18th century.

In addition to the lack of clear constructions, the scarce selection of contemporary plans and descriptions about the outwork of Rakvere castle is also one of the reasons why the feature is so little known. Only Balthasar Russow (ca. 1536–1600), minister in Tallinn describes in his Livonian Chronicle forming the outwork during the Livonian War (1558–1583). According to this, the first phase of the outwork was built in 1558 after the Russian troops took over Rakvere castle from the Livonian Order and started to build additional fortifications against firearms. The Russian troops 'dug steeply down a slope in front of the castle and built walls on both side... Up on the hill and wall Russians built large and powerful pullwerks, blockhouses, towers and fortifications by using trunks and logs; likewise they built several hundred living houses in between of walls for some thousand men. This was the outwork. The German castle was used as a prison and storehouse, where no Russian could live except their commander.' (Russow 1993, 113). The next record about supplementing the outwork comes from 1574 when Swedish troops were besieging the castle and Russians erected new walls against Swedish positions. After several attempts, the Swedish army finally conquered Rakvere castle when burning down all the outwork in 1581. Possibly the Swedish army reinforced the outwork after gaining control of the castle – on 29 May 1581 an inventory was conducted and necessary fortifications planned (Pagel & Kirss 2008, 71). The next year projects for additional fortifications for many castles, including Rakvere, were ordered from Peter Hertig and Johan Baptist (Nurk 2014, 99). However, it is not known what exactly was implemented. Oliver Pagel and Odette Kirss date the bastions in Rakvere to the 1580s, suggesting that fortifications were built on top of the Russian-time outer wall by the Swedish army (Pagel & Kirss 2008, 71). Despite the possible fortifications, a small Polish force conquered the castle in 1602. The small scale of Polish force that was needed to conquer the castle, indicates that the outwork was either not fully built or the fortification was not fully manned. Just three years later, in 1605 the Swedish army conquered Rakvere castle again. The leaving

Polish troops exploded part of the castle and the Swedish army eventually destroyed the rest. In 1619, Anthonis Goeteeris made a drawing of Rakvere castle during his journey to Moscow – most of the stone castle seems to be intact, except for the north-east corner, which probably was exploded by the Polish. It is most interesting that not a single feature of the outwork is depicted on the drawing. This probably means that by this time all fortifications outside the stone castle had been destroyed. In 1635, Rakvere was removed from the list of fortifications of the Swedish kingdom and since then, the hill together with the castle ruins belonged to the Rakvere manor. However, differently from the artists who painted Rakvere castle in the 17th and 18th century, Samuel Waxelberg noticed the outwork when plotting the castle in 1683 (Fig. 1). The outwork is marked as a single unbroken line and only at the NW-corner of the stone castle there is a feature that probably was the only preserved bastion-like formation by that time. Since then this map has been the major, if not the only source once the outwork of Rakvere castle is considered. Directly west from the bastion-like feature is a small square marked by a red circle. It is possible that it marks a small and separate fortification on the slope (see below and Jonuks 2001), but it could also indicate another fortification that has not been located by archaeological fieldwork so far. Another interesting feature is a long earthwork on the western side of the stone castle (Fig. 2: 11). The earthwork is situated at the foothill and it is possible that this has been a rampart to fortify the castle from the side where outwork was not possible due to the natural reasons. The uninvestigated rampart is preserved until nowadays. In addition, until the 20th century a marsh extended all along the western side of Vallimägi and thus this side had been well protected by the natural conditions.

Fig. 1. *The outwork of Rakvere castle on the map by Samuel Waxelberg, 1683.*
Jn 1. *Rakvere linnuse eelkaitsevöönd Samuel Waxelbergi 1683. a plaanil.*
(Swedish War Archives, SE/KrA/0406/28/057/002)

EARLIER ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES

The earliest documentation of archaeological studies of features outside the stone castle dates from 1948 when employees of Rakvere museum, Arvo Puu and Veera Ranne noticed an occupation layer with pottery, a crossbow arrowhead, charcoal and grain to the north of the stone castle, exposed in trenches excavated during the WWII. Unfortunately the photo, where the location had been shown, is missing by now and it is thus not possible to locate where the feature was seen (see Jonuks 2003 and references therein).

Since the 1970s the majority of studies in Rakvere were focused on the stone castle and only single test excavations were conducted on the north (Fig. 2: 4) and east walls (Fig. 2: 10) of the outwork (Aus 1984). Burnt wooden remains found in the course of these studies together with northwest Russian-style pottery confirmed that wooden constructions have once stood on the walls (Aus 1984; Tvauri 2002). Toivo Aus associated these remains with fortifications built in the 16th century and described by Balthasar Russow. The 16th century ceramic and other finds, found everywhere on the ground across the northern part of outwork, confirmed the dating together with Russow's record that Russian troops were settling inside the outwork during the Livonian War (Aus 1984, 17). Burnt trunks are recorded also along the

Fig. 2. *Outline of the outwork of Rakvere castle. Numbers indicate the features in the text: 1 – NW fortification, 2 – N fortification, 3 – NE fortification, 4 – N wall, 5 – inner outwork, 6 – limestone walls, 7 – NW bastion, 8 – fortification on the western slope, 9 – W wall, 10 – E wall, 11 – W rampart, 12 – W wall, 13 – rectangular structure of the SW fortification, 14 – SW fortification, 15 – S fortification, 16 – SE fortification.*

Jn 2. *Rakvere linnuse eelkaitsevööndi skeem. Numbritega on märgitud tekstis esinevad kaitsevööndi osad. 1 – loodekindlustus, 2 – põhja-kindlustus, 3 – kirde-kindlustus, 4 – põhjavall, 5 – sisemine kaitsevall, 6 – paekivimüüridega konstruktsioon, 7 – loodebastion, 8 – kindlustus läänenõlval, 9 – läänevall, 10 – idavall, 11 – alumine läänevall, 12 – läänevall, 13 – edelakindlustuse nelinurkne osa, 14 – edelakindlustus, 15 – lõunakindlustus, 16 – kagukindlustus.*

Drawing / Joonis: Tõnno Jonuks

east wall (Fig. 2: 10), confirming that wooden constructions once stood there (Jonuks 2004). It is interesting to note that wooden remains are found on the east wall, while the west wall (Fig. 2: 9, 12) has had stone constructions where clay is used to bind brick and natural stone (Jonuks 2006; 2019). However, as all the remains of the constructions are situated almost on the ground these are heavily damaged and only the lower horizon of the ruins is preserved. Demolishing is partly due to the natural conditions, but even more due to the construction of the tracks along the walls. Vallimägi was opened for citizens for walks and festivals during many centuries but particularly in the 1930s when a system of public paths was created. According to the municipality reports from that time paths were paved, hills levelled and valleys filled for this purpose (Pagel & Kirss 2008, 97). For instance, observations have confirmed (Jonuks 2006) that the original north wall has been on different levels with three clearly higher locations. It seems that three fortifications, or bases for towers, have been on the north wall – in the northwest corner (Fig. 2: 1), in the northeast corner (Fig. 2: 3) and one in the middle of the wall (Fig. 2: 2) – which are connected with a lower wall (Fig. 2: 4). Levelling the original walls in the 20th century is the reason why the whole north wall now is eventually of an even height.

When ruins of the outwork fortifications have been found in a number of locations, then clear constructions are rare. One of the foundations has been located on the east wall

(Fig. 2: 10), where Toivo Aus found a clay-paved quadrangular stone foundation built on top of an earlier construction (Aus 1984, 19). Although none of the finds suggested the function of the construction, it was interpreted as a foundation of a blockhouse or a tower (*ibid.*). Another construction that was located at the west wall (Fig. 2: 8) sat on the outer slope, it had a stone foundation or stone walls with a possible wooden superstructure (Jonuks 2001). The location of this feature is the same as a small square marked on Waxelberg's plan. A gun barrel from this construction was dated to the period of the Livonian War by Ain Mäesalu (TÜ). The third identified construction (Fig. 2: 6) consists of two narrow stone walls, made of unworked limestone, on the way to the main entrance of the castle. It was not possible to suggest any particular purpose of this partially preserved construction, but it is possible that the construction is part of the late medieval outwork (Fig. 2: 5), forming a two metres wide wall with stone layers on both sides and filled with natural gravel and sand (Jonuks 2015).

Most of the previous studies are focused on the northern part of the outwork although the only clearly visible structures are located on the southern side of the castle. The southeast fortification (Fig. 2: 16) has not been studied, except a brief watching in 2006 (Jonuks 2006) when an electricity cable was installed passing the northern side of the hill. A thick layer of black soil containing 16th century potsherds, was detected at the lower part of the slope and in the valley beneath the hill while the soil was significantly thinner on the higher slopes. It was suggested that the eroded layer originates from the top of the fortification and has been eroded after its destruction (Jonuks 2006). Part of the layer could have also formed *in situ* as it is most likely that the valley between the castle and the east wall was used to billet the troops.

The few studies outside the outwork, in the southern part of Vallimägi have not revealed any archaeological features. Although it is highly possible that the natural moraine hill south of the castle has been used as a campsite for besieging, so far nothing has been found to prove it. An atypical spearhead found from the Tõusu street (RM 3482/A 67) could belong to the period of the Livonian War but unfortunately the exact find location is not known. In 2019 most of the topsoil of Vallimägi was stripped off in the course of renovating Vallimägi to a modern concert site. A single sherd of pottery was found from the topsoil close to Tõusu Street providing some more evidence to suggest that the area had been used possibly also in the Late Medieval or Early Modern Age. However, as the sherd was found from the topsoil and no *in situ* features were found, it is difficult to speculate any further how exactly the area had been used.

STUDIES IN 2019 ON THE SOUTH-WESTERN FORTIFICATION, THE 'TROJAN HILL'

In 2019, the southwestern fortification, locally known also as the 'Trojan hill', was changed to a belvedere (Jonuks 2019). The artificial hill has two clearly different levels, with a higher southern peak (Fig. 2: 14) and a lower northern part (Fig. 2: 13), the latter had a regular rectangular depression. In the course of the construction work, topsoil was removed from most of the construction and on the eastern slope, exposing the ruins of double-layered fortifications (Fig. 3). The lower layer of the peak consisted of ca. 10–20 cm thick heavily burnt soil, it included sherds of 16th century NW-Russian-style pottery, a few animal bones, melted pieces of copper alloy and slices of pitch. This heavily burnt layer continued also on the eastern slope and submerged under the wall connecting the SW and S fortifications (Fig. 2: 15). The layer did not contain any *in situ* remains. Only a few burnt circles in the sand beneath the burnt layer indicated branches or small-scale trunks stuck into the ground. It was interpreted as remains of fences but unfortunately no system was possible to follow. It seems that after the

Fig. 3. *Stripping the topsoil on the SW bastion. Photo from the north. The rectangular depression on the foreground and higher bastion in the rear. The dark and burnt soil layer covers the slope of the bastion. A burnt clayish layer, mixed with burnt logs and stones from the western wall at the right side of the photo.*

Jn 3. *Kasvumulla eemaldamine edelabastionilt. Foto põhjast. Esiplaanil on nelinurkne süvend, tagaplaanil kõrgem bastion. Bastioni põhjanõlv on kaetud söe ja põlenud pinnase kihiga. Foto paremas servas on näha eelkaitsevööndi idavalli põlenud savi, tukkide ja kivide rusu.*

Photo / Foto: Tõnno Jonuks

heavy fire the ruins were dispersed, apparently to prepare the site for the next phase of fortifications.

Above this heavily burnt layer was another, distinctively different debris – it consisted mostly of small pieces of limestone, mixed with clay and lime mortar. The layer was apparently a debris layer of light stone constructions – in most part, it was not possible to distinguish any constructions, but occasionally on the southern side small remains of a limestone wall with clay binder were noticed (Fig. 4). By using metal detector seven tin/lead-based bullets with the diameter of around 2 cm were found and one with the diameter of 1.1 cm. In addition, also a large cannon bullet with the diameter of 7.3 cm was found from a clump of still soft and plastic lime paste.

Fig. 4. *Cross-section of the collapsed stone construction on top of the SW fortification.*

Jn 4. *Edelakindlustuse ülemise rusukihi kivikonstruktsiooni ristlõige.*

Photo / Foto: Tõnno Jonuks

Topsoil was also cleaned from the lower level on the northern part of the fortification (Fig. 2: 13). The rectangular depression located there did not have any layer of datable finds leaving the date and purpose of the depression open. Most part of the western wall is originally the 16th century fortification, constructed of debris consisting of a mixture of clay, charred wood and limestone. However, the depression partially cut the 16th century fortifications and reached deeper, indicating that it was built later. The northern and western walls of the depression consist of local moraine and no floor or occupation layer was noticed. As a result, it seems most likely that the depression could be an uncompleted fortification from the WWII when Vallimägi was used for antiaircraft guns by the German army. It is possible that a larger observation site was planned and the ground was prepared for that, but the construction was never finished.

The eastern slope of the fortification was covered with an even heavily burnt layer, the same as was found from the lower layer of the higher peak. It is likely that most part of the layer is eroded or has been cleaned from the top. Significantly the burnt layer continued also below the wall connecting the SW (Fig. 2: 14) and S fortification (Fig. 2: 15), indicating a secondary date of the wall. As such, it seems likely that the earlier phase of the outwork at the southern side of the castle consisted of separated hills in the eastern and western ridges of the Vallimägi esker. Between these fortified hills, a natural valley continued until the stone castle. The separated hills, most probably artificially heightened, were originally fortified with wooden constructions, providing also control over the valley. A light wooden palisade in the valley can neither be excluded nor proved at the present state of research. After the first phase of the outwork was burnt down, the remains of the wooden fortifications were scattered and pushed down from the hill. After that, and now most probably under the supervision of Swedish engineers in the 1580s, the full complex of fortifications was built, consisting of two higher hills on SW (Fig. 2: 14) and SE (Fig. 2: 16) ridges of the esker and a lower fortification (Fig. 2: 15) in the middle, connected with walls to higher fortifications. Unfortunately, the smaller construction in the middle is so heavily damaged by path constructions in the 20th century that it is difficult to follow. Both higher fortifications are separated from the rest of the esker by ditches, clearly visible on nowadays maps, but filled when the system of paths was established.

FINDS

Despite numerous studies, the finds from the outwork are rather rare. So far no finds earlier than the mid-16th century have been found, suggesting that the previous fortifications were either missing or very modest and wiped off by the later extensive phases. The majority of finds consists of the late 16th century NW-Russian-style pottery. In addition, only a few larger objects have been found, like a padlock from the northwestern corner or the gun barrel from the eastern fortification.

The SW fortification (Fig. 2: 14) was somehow richer in finds – mostly light firearm bullets and a cannon ball were collected from the upper debris layer and from the burnt remains on the slope. This was also the first time when a metal detector was used at the outwork area and the firearm bullets (Fig. 5) were collected as a result. Firearm bullets occurred in both layers of the fortification, confirming a short chronological distance between the formations of the layers. A rich collection of cannon balls has also been found over the years from the same side of the outwork and from its eroded slopes. Unfortunately, most of the cannon balls are lost by now or are stored in houses in the neighbourhood of the castle as souvenirs. Surprisingly potsherds were very rare in the SW fortification, especially when compared with the number of

fragments collected from the northern part of the outwork. Still, all the pottery is very similar, belonging to the group of the 16th century NW-Russian pottery.

The most interesting group of finds are flat, 5–9 mm thick pieces of pitch with rib-like formations on both sides (Fig. 6). These pieces were originally interpreted as a layer to make wickers waterproof. As both surfaces are covered with ribs, the pitch was probably added in between two layers of woven branches. As an alternative interpretation, the slices of pitch can also represent a shell of igniting ball, covering and protecting the explosive compound. Pitch-fragments were measured with p-XRF at the University of Tartu, Institute of History and Archaeology by Ragnar Saage. However, no elements that could be connected with the explosive compound were detected. The measured amount of K and S was so small that it probably represented natural values. Thus, the interpretation of the pitch slices remains open and will be addressed in future studies.

Fig. 5. *Tin/lead-based bullets from the SW fortification.*
Jn 5. *Edelakindlustusest kogutud tina/plii-sulamist püssikuulid.*
(RM A 181: 17–20.)
Photo/Foto: Tõnno Jonuks

Fig. 6. *Slices of pitch with ribbed surfaces from the SW fortification.*
Jn 6. *Ribilise pinnaga tõrvatükid edelakindlustuselt.*
(RM A 181: 3.)
Photo/Foto: Tõnno Jonuks

DISCUSSION

Summarizing the often occasional studies at the outwork of Rakvere castle, which have taken place over several decades, we can suggest different periods in forming the outwork.

Possibly the first phase of the outwork to protect the stone castle from firearms was made already in the Late Middle Ages, before the Livonian War. The material remains from this period are missing, but it is likely that a crescent wall north of the castle (Fig. 2: 5) that does not fit with the plan of the rest of the outwork, is representing this phase. Only two trenches have crossed this region, one from the western side, exposing a wall piled of unworked limestone without any arrangement and binding material. Another trench, from the eastern side exposed the construction of two narrow walls (Fig. 2: 6) filled with natural gravel and sand. It is thus possible that before the Livonian War an outwork was planned and possibly started to be built to the northern part of the castle. This is also the side where castle gates are opened and thus the outwork stands between the town and the castle, providing additional security for entrances to the castle. The changed natural shape of the Vallimägi esker should also be considered – glacial eskers are usually N–S orientated and the northern tip is smoothly reducing, following the speed of a melting glacier. Considering this, the crescent wall possibly situates on the original higher point of the natural esker and from this wall to the north the height of the esker reduced. The medieval town was built on the gradually lowering end of

the esker. It is likely that this phase of the outwork was never finished and Rakvere faced the events of 1558, when the Russian troops approached it, with an unfortified town and castle, protected only by a mound of natural stones and sand. According to Johann Renner the first plundering of Rakvere by the Russian troops during the Livonian War was repelled by the Livonian Order by firing with cannons from a 'hill beside the castle' (Renner 1995, 33). Most probably this description refers to the same early form of the outwork.

After the castle was overtaken by the Russian army, its position and meaning changed – during the Middle Ages Rakvere was a small and unimportant stronghold inside the territory of Livonian Order which never has had a fully-manned garrison. This is probably also the reason of modest fortifications for the town and a missing earthwork for the castle. For the Russian troops, Rakvere became the most important border castle in North Estonia and a base for further attacks to Tallinn and elsewhere. This is probably the main reason why such a massive outwork was constructed around Rakvere castle in 1558. According to Balthasar Russow, Russian troops in Rakvere 'dug steeply down a slope in front of the castle and built walls on both side…'. Most likely this means that the smoothly lowering northern part of the natural esker was piled for the artificial E–W orientated north wall (Fig. 2: 4), which would be impossible to form naturally without human impact. By doing this, most likely part of the medieval town was destroyed as well and an even level was created where modern Kreutzwaldi Street starts. Archaeological monitoring at Kreutzwaldi Street has confirmed that only natural sand and gravel layers are under the modern street paving and thus the original occupation layers are probably mixed with sand and heaped into the north wall.

Most likely, wooden buildings stood all over the partly natural and partly artificial earthworks, made by the Russian troops between the 1550s and the 1580s, as was also reported by Balthasar Russow. According to him, the buildings and towers were erected on top of the walls and with this the earthwork resembled not so much the Western bastion-systems, but rather the Russian town fortifications (see also Rappoport 1969). This also allowed accommodating and controlling of large troops inside the walls, the more so as the town of Rakvere did not have any fortification. Differently of the medieval attempt to protect the stone castle with earthwork from the northern side only, the Russian outwork surrounded the castle from the northern, eastern and southern side. As the stone castle was situated on the western esker anyway, the western side was additionally protected by a separated fort on the slope (Fig. 2: 8) and a possible rampart at the foothill (Fig. 2: 11), facing over the western marsh. However, as the rampart is not studied yet, it may also belong to the next, the Swedish period. It is still unknown if a continuous outwork covered the southern side or was it protected by two higher and separate hills only.

The Swedish army tried conquering the castle in 1574 but failed, despite using igniting bullets. It is tempting to associate the flat pieces of pitch with shells of igniting bullets fired to the outwork during this siege, although this association still needs proof. Rakvere castle was successfully conquered finally in 1584 when the castle was burnt down. Most likely it meant that only the outwork was burnt, as also confirmed by the archaeological excavations at several places on the northern, eastern and southern side of the outwork. Deciding by the amount of burnt remains the wooden fortification had to be massive. From the burnt layer of the SW bastion a number of pieces of melt copper alloy pieces were collected, again referring to a massive fire that had destroyed the place.

Most probably after the castle was overtaken by the Swedish crown the outwork was rebuilt. At many sites a double layered fortification has been recorded, e.g. on the eastern wall

(Aus 1984, 19; Fig. 2: 10) and SW fortification (Jonuks 2019; Fig. 2: 14). It is also apparent that joint walls on the southern side to connect the SW (Fig. 2: 14) and SE fortification (Fig. 2: 16) were built only after the massive fire and thus most likely postdate the 1584 siege. Between the SW and SE fortifications lies a much smaller construction (Fig. 2: 15) that originally had only three walls, leaving the castle side opened. It is possible that also this fort was constructed by Swedish military engineers, as such three-part fortification forms now a system that resembles the early bastions. It is also most likely that a bastion in NW corner of the stone castle (Fig. 2: 7), the only one marked as a bastion by Samuel Waxelberg in 1683, was built by the Swedish army. However, this bastion has been so badly damaged during the last few decades that almost nothing remains and thus the construction is not available any more for studies.

So Rakvere castle was reinforced again by the time of Swedish-Polish war (1600–1629), but possibly not fully staffed, allowing the small Polish troops to conquer the stronghold easily. This started the final degeneration of Rakvere castle, culminating in 1605 when the Swedish army conquered the castle back from the Polish, the latter exploded part of the castle and the victorious Swedes destroyed the castle conclusively.

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Waxelberg, S. 1683. Deliniatio Geometrica Öffwer Slottet Weßenbergh Medh Deß Hackelwerck. I Ehstland och Wierische Gebet belägit. Sambt deß grund, prospect, Horizont och Situation som sigh wedh tijdhen Eleverer och representerer, afftagit uthi May Monadh Anno 1683. (original in Swedish War Archives, SE/KrA/0406/28/057/002.)

RAKVERE ORDULINNUSE EELKAITSEVÖÖNDI ARHEOLOOGILISTEST UURINGUTEST

Tõnno Jonuks

Võrreldes Rakvere ordulinnusega, on selle ümber olevat eelkaitsevööndit (jn 1–2) uuritud märksa vähem. Samuti on uuringud tõukunud pigem päästekaevamiste vajadustest, mitte probleemkaevamiste loogikast ja nii on üldistuste tegemine probleemne. Ehkki esimesed uuringud tehti eelkaitsevööndil juba peagi pärast Teist maailmasõda, on seal arheoloogilise jälgimisega süsteemsemalt infot kogutud alles viimasel paaril kümnendil. Põhiosa uuringutest on koondunud linnusest põhja pool olevale eelkaitsevööndi osale, kuid 2019. a uuriti ka linnusest lõunasse jäävat edelakindlustust ehk Trooja mäge (jn 3–4). Uuringute käigus leiti, et sellel lasub kaheosaline rusukiht – alumine koosnes vaid tugevasti põlenud pinnasest, ülemine valdavalt laialivarisenud kergest kivikonstruktsioonist. Mõlemast kihist koguti püssikuule (jn 5) ning ülemisest rusukihist ka üks kahurikuul.

Seniseid uuringuid koondades võib Rakvere linnuse eelkaitsevööndi kujunemist näha vähemalt kolme etapina. Tõenäoliselt 16. saj algul, enne Liivimaa sõda valmis linnuse põhjaküljele peamiste sissepääsude kaitseks poolkaarekujuline töötlemata kividest vall (jn 2: 5). Tõenäoliselt ehitati see algse Vallimäe põhjapoolsemale kõrgendikule, kuid ilmselt ei jõutud ehitustöid Liivimaa sõjaks lõpetada. Rakvere linnuse lahinguta üle võtnud Vene väed kujundasid sellest oma kõige olulisema kindluse Põhja-Eestis. Kuna Rakvere linnal kindlustused puudusid, siis rajati kivilinnuse ümber varasemast ulatuslik eelkaitsevöönd. Balthasar Russowi kroonika järgi kaevati selleks Vallimäge osaliselt üles ja nii kuhjati ilmselt põhjavall (jn 2: 4); linnust mujal ümbritsenud, peamiselt looduslikele kõrgendikele rajati puitkindlustused. Nii nägi Vallimägi välja ilmselt pigem linna kui kindlusena ning eelkaitsevööndi ja kivilinnuse vahele sai majutada suuri väehulki. Uuringutega selgus, et idavallil (jn 2: 10) domineerisid puidust kaitserajatised, samuti ka edela- (jn 2: 14) ning ilmselt ka kagukindlustusel (jn 2: 16). Läänevallil (jn 2: 12) on pigem jälgitavad kergete kiviehitiste rusud. Rajatud eelkaitsevöönd pakkus linnusele tugevat kaitset ning Rootsi vägi ei suutnud Rakveret vallutada enne 1584. aastat, mil kroonikateate järgi põletati eelkaitsevöönd maha. Ilmselt sellest sündmusest maha jäänud massiivne põlengukiht oli selgelt jälgitav edelabastioni alumise kihina, kuid ulatuslikku põlengukihti on leitud pea kõikide uuringutega. Rakvere linnuse enda valdusesse saanud Rootsi väed alustasid kolmanda suure ehitusetapina eelkaitsevööndi moderniseerimist ning lisaks uutele, nüüd ilmselt kergetele kivikonstruktsioonidele, rajati kolmeosaline kindlustuste süsteem linnuse lõunaküljel ja üks bastion kivilinnuse loodenurka. Ilmselt hävis kogu eelkaitsevöönd Poola-Rootsi sõdades lõplikult. Ainus dokumentaalne allikas eelkaitsevööndi kohta valmis ligi sajand hiljem, kui Samuel Waxelberg joonistas 1683. aastal esimese täpse plaani Rakvere linnuse ja selle ümbruse kohta (jn 1).