

Top panel of the stained glass in the dining room

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– February 2014 –

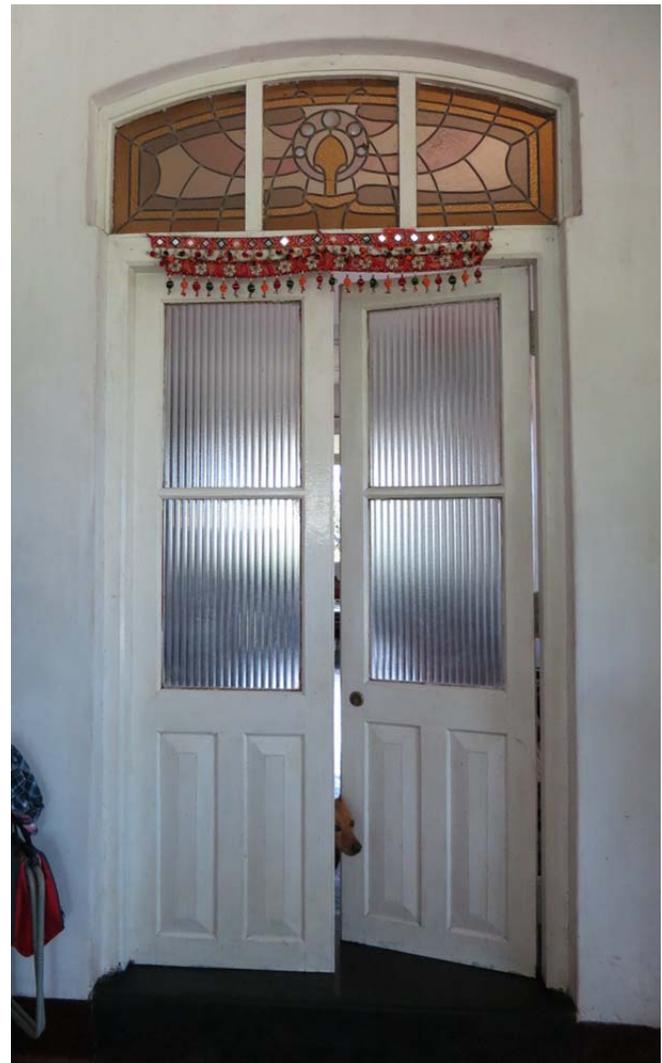
The first month of 2014 has come and gone and we can only hope that the delightfully cool and pleasant weather we had will remain during the shortest month of the year as well!

Last month's newsletter contained a photograph of the stained glass panel above our front door. While it is a companion piece to the very large stained glass window that provides wonderful light to our dining room, it has a sad story. My grandfather, Antoine Joseph van der Poorten (A.J.), built the house in which Arlene and I currently live in the 19th Century. My recollection is that the stained glass, both over the front door and the large panels in the dining room, were made in Brussels. A.J. designed the pattern and the stained glass was made in Brussels; the finished pieces, together with the lead channeling, were shipped to Sri Lanka in little crates. It is unlikely that A.J.'s father made them because I was always made to understand that A.J. and his father had a major falling out before he left Belgium for parts east!

When my father and mother moved into the house in 1946, they embarked upon an extensive renovation of the old abode. My eldest brother, Tony, was apprenticing with Edward, Reid and Begg, Sri Lanka's premier architectural firm (Geoffrey Bawa was later a senior partner). Tony began re-assembling and re-configuring some of the stained glass already in the house. He found four panels that matched the overhead panel; they were installed into the two doors. Unfortunately, years later, someone forgot to put the door-stays in place, the two doors banged shut in a heavy wind, and all the stained glass ended up on the floor, in a heap of multi-coloured shards!

Next month, I'll recount more of the history of the stained glass at HPH, which came out of the workshops of the van der Poorten family business in Brussels. Several members of the vdP family have recently discovered many churches in Belgium adorned with the work of Antoine Joseph van der Poorten, his brother and his father. Thanks to Varuni van der Poorten, I might even be able to illustrate that information

with some photographs from churches in Flanders in which the van der Poorten efforts are still evident.



The front door: the glass panels were originally four panels of stained glass that matched the upper panel. That's Natta peering through the door!

But, back to February 2014!

We've just had one of our oldest employees, Seneviratne, filling in for Gamini for a week or two. He was born on Halgolla and spent his childhood and early youth here. Later he was in charge of the East Coast holiday home that we owned from the early sixties until our departure to Canada at the end of 1973. His stay here has provided us with the opportunity to go down memory lane and reminisce about both the crop and livestock diversification at Halgolla and our pioneering building efforts on the East Coast. Near Challitivu Island at Panichchankerni, we built the first "A-Frame" structure ever constructed in Sri Lanka. Seneviratne was but a callow youth then and is now a grizzled veteran. Fortunately, he has an excellent memory for those wonderful days both here and in that wonderful part of Sri Lanka's East Coast! More of these memories in our next newsletter.

We are also pleased to be listed in the latest, 5th, edition of the Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka by our friend Royston Ellis, just published. More on this in our next newsletter!

Warm wishes!
Arlene & Emil

For the month of February, each visiting group will receive what has become a trademark of HPH hospitality, the complimentary "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies."

**In addition,
the fifth day of any 5-day booking
will be absolutely free**

Daytrips from HPH

The following is the second of a continuing series on suggested day trips from HPH to lesser-known places of interest. Last month we featured Panduwasnuwara.

Yapahuwa: mediaeval capital of Sri Lanka

Yapahuwa has been described, accurately, in Wikipedia, as "one of the ephemeral capitals of Mediaeval Sri Lanka." It served as the capital of the country from 1273 to 1284. It owes its existence to King Bhuvanekabahu—he moved the capital of Sri Lanka from Dambadeniya, taking the Sacred Tooth Relic with him, in order to secure a stronger base against the advancing Dravidian armies. This protective measure was successful until 1284 when a fresh invasion succeeded in over-running Yapahuwa and capturing the Tooth Relic.

The enormous granite staircase, still in an excellent state of preservation, is the showpiece of this one-time capital of Sri Lanka. The Yapahuwa lions (featured on the old 10-rupee notes) that flank the staircase show a Chinese influence. Other interesting sights include the remains of a stupa, a Bo-tree enclosure, a rock shelter (used by monks before and since Yapahuwa was Sri Lanka's capital), several caves at the base

with inscriptions, and other elements typical of a place of this nature. There are also the remains of fortifications meant to dissuade potential invaders.



The magnificent staircase



The Yapahuwa lion

Also of interest is the Yapawwa Rajamaha Vihara temple built during the subsequent Kandyan Period of Sri Lanka's history. There is also a small but interesting museum. All of this is set around and upon a huge rock typical of the topography of this area.

Yapahuwa is a comfortable day-excursion from HPH and if we have an indication of interest in advance of a guest's arrival we could make the necessary arrangements for them to experience this little gem of the 13th Century in the North Western Province.

HPH rated as [Best Home Stay](#) for 2013.

**HPH recommended in the
[Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka](#)
5th edition, 2014**

**HPH is highly recommended on Trip Advisor.
See what our previous [guests](#) have had to say!**



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**Sri Lanka – rated as a top tourist destination for
2011, 2012 & 2013.**

**[The Lonely Planet](#)
[Condé Nast Traveller](#)
[The New York Times](#)
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For information or to book your accommodation, check our website www.halgollaplantationhome.com or contact Emil van der Poorten: emil@halgollaplantationhome.com or by phone: 94-77-347-0702 or 94-72-284-9770