



Soaking pool on Feb 25th

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– March 2014 –

February has proved to be a very bright, dry and hot month, though our water supply has not reached anything resembling crisis point, thanks to the work done over the last two years to augment our spring water supply.

We've worked on the new walking trail which is an extension of the "Ela Trail". It starts from the drop off to the Soaking Pool, goes up to the Cinnamon Patch and then connects to the Plumbago Pit Path, which leads to the Vanilla planting and then back to the house.

We've made a few non-intrusive improvements to the Soaking Pool and these include a bamboo "pipe" under which visitors can now "shower." I even have a picture of yours truly "christening" this new feature but, since this newsletter is meant for family viewing, will resist the temptation of putting it in, inserting, instead, a photo of the Soaking Pool with myself and Natta in a contemplative mood!



Our first vanilla pods!

Our Durian crop is over as I write this and it seems that the family that leased the trees for the season have done well with the (off-season) crop and are looking forward to the crop that is now promised by a new setting of flowers.

Incidentally, the drought we've recently endured might well have been the reason for the additional number of vanilla flowers that have blossomed and which Mallika continues to pollinate as a part of her daily routine. Senevi is now her understudy in this work and Padma also appears to know how to perform this essential task

I haven't been able to expand on the history of the van der Poorten stained glass windows as promised in the last newsletter because I am waiting for some fascinating information of a stained glass window in a church in Australia, allegedly bearing A. J. van der Poorten's signature. My grandfather originally intended to settle in Australia before opting for Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) with his (Belgian) friend Delay—the two of them married sisters from the Aluthnuwara area (near Mawanella in the Sabaragamuwa Province), most famous for its revered *Devale*.

However, I also said that I would relate some stories of the Panichchankerni area of Sri Lanka's east coast, so here goes!

From my high school days when my father and I "discovered" this part of Sri Lanka's East Coast, I had wanted to establish some sort of holiday hideaway in the vicinity of what was then Sri Lanka's best-kept secret, Challitivu Island and its incredibly beautiful and accessible coral reef. We ultimately did and my daughter, Michele, now past the half-century mark, took her first tentative steps on the beach there.

Alas, the effort to establish a semi-commercial operation did not bear (financial) fruit, but we had some truly enjoyable times at Chenaikudah Wadi with friends and family until our departure for Canada in 1973. A recent visit to the area was something of a disappointment—the war, the tsunami, and now uncontrolled development have reduced a once picturesque place to a somewhat pale reminder of its former glory. However, all is not lost because it would take more than a few short-sighted "developers" to ruin nature's bounty and I am informed that the coral reef is still in fine fettle and the white sand beaches are still among the loveliest in Sri Lanka.

Warm wishes!
Arlene & Emil

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

In addition, 25% off on any 4-day booking made for the month of March

Daytrips from HPH

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

Panavitiya ambalama and Karagahagedera ambalama

Ambalams are unique structures in Sri Lanka—they are resting places that offer free shelter and water for travellers. Typically they are open structures with a sloped tiled roof on columns of timber or masonry. The walls are short and wide so that one could sit on them. They were first built in the days when travel was by foot or bullock-cart and were necessary as safe resting places. It is also thought that ambalams were meeting places for the local villagers but it seems that they attracted a cosmopolitan crowd as well. Ancient Sinhalese literature records the activities there—“some of them relate the stories of Rama and Sita. Some recite poetry in contest with each other. Amongst them are those who commit to memory songs of praise produced in honor of the reigning king. Foreigners coming from countries such as Cola, Pandya, Gujarat, Tulu coutry, Maharastra, Andhra and Vanga learn the teachings of the Buddha in Sinhalese and recite it. Some challenge each other in solving riddles.” (www.lankalibrary.com)

Two famous ambalams are found near Narammala, under the authority of the Department of Archeology. The Karagahagedara Ambalama sits on a flat stretch of rock by the side of the road with paddy fields and a patch of scrub jungle on either side. Made entirely of timber, it sits on four large rocks.



Karagahagedara Ambalama

The Panavitiya Ambalama is also built entirely of timber. It has been renovated and restored by the Department of Archeology and each wooden piece is intricately carved including the rafters.



Carved rafters of the Panavitiya Ambalama

The two ambalams at Narammala are 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 these unique buildings of cultural and architectural interest.

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.

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