



Feast or famine! One of our new water storage sites, augmenting our supply, after a recent downpour

Halgolla Plantation Home

**Accommodation of a different kind
– December 2014 –**

One of the wettest Novembers in recent history draws to a close as we embark on our monthly report from atop our little piece of the Kandyan foothills. Yes, it's been very wet and the soaking rains, while they have brought a few problems, are not to be complained about. For one thing, the foliage around HPH has never been so luxuriant and has to be seen to be believed! All of those guests who could never get over how lush HPH's surroundings are will really be surprised at how much (even) greener they now are!

The bad news, though, is that the macaques have, of necessity, become even more brazen in their depredations and NOTHING seems safe from them. The dearth of food for a steadily increasing simian population without any predators in this area has created a significant problem for anyone growing anything resembling food. Oh, well, we've battled them so long that another display of destructiveness from that corner won't intimidate us!

Our meager workforce is hard put to control the weed growth along our self-directed walking trails, but maintaining our ecological focus, we've succeeded in keeping them clear.

The wet weather has also brought about a fresh burst of growth in our vanilla vines which were dormant for so long because of the droughts that prevailed for an extended period. Our "cinnamon patch rehabilitation" is beginning to show results and our workers are "learning on the job" in the matter of peeling the bark from this spice plant which is not traditional in this part of Sri Lanka.

Nancy continues to perform yeoman service in the matter of maintaining and enhancing the quality of the HPH website and a recent addition to it is a [van der Poorten Family](#) page which has a picture of Sri Lanka's first van der Poorten, Antoine Joseph (AJ), offering a rose to his wife and lifelong

partner, Ranmenika. This is the (sentimental) side of a man who was never suspected of having one! (I never knew him in the flesh because he had died before I arrived). AJ led a busy life, first as a young stained-glass artist in his native Belgium, then as a sailor who, with an Irish friend by the name of Delay, navigated a good part of the globe before the Suez Canal was built, in a journey intended to make them settlers in Australia in the latter part of the 19th C. AJ changed his mind when he and his travelling companion had a bad experience in the interior of the land Down Under. His subsequent putting together of a significant land empire in Sri Lanka, activity as a diplomat representing his country of origin, investments in the far east and a stint managing that part of Central Africa that, literally, belonged to Leopold II of Belgium would have overwhelmed a 21st C workaholic, leave alone a little man (he was barely taller than five feet!) in that day and age.

Check out our new [home page](#) as well as the [Your Hosts](#) page with information about and photos of Halgolla and the van der Poorten family and the [Reviews](#) page.



AJ and two of his daughters in the early 1900s

December promises to be a busy month for us as we have many guest bookings, and we will need all hands on deck to keep things running smoothly both in and out of our home. However, with the co-operation of our small group of staff, drawn from HPH's rural environs, we intend making it an enjoyable experience not only for our visitors but for all of us here as well. In fact that is what has made HPH such a unique experience for all concerned.

To the largest extent, guests are drawn to HPH by the comments they read on Trip Advisor and, if you are one of those who've spent time with us and haven't already done so **please place your review on the TA website at www.tripadvisor.com/reviewit.**



Warm regards to all for a happy holiday season and warm wishes for the New Year,
Arlene & Emil

**For each booking in the month of January -
a pack of HPH-grown cinnamon (ground or sticks)
and a pack of Special HPH-grown and -roasted coffee
and the "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies"
which has become a trademark of HPH hospitality**

Halgolla Plantation Home

- rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri Lanka 2013
- recommended in the [Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka](#) 5th edition, 2014

Daytrips from HPH

Munneswaram Temple

The Hindu temple of Munneswaram consists of 5 temples including a Buddhist one; each of the 4 Hindu temples is dedicated to a particular deity. It was first built in the 11th C and reconstructed in the 1400s. The Portuguese destroyed it in 1578, keeping only one building as a Roman Catholic chapel. The temple was then rebuilt by the King at that time, destroyed again by the Portuguese, rebuilt by the local people and then reconstructed by King Kirti Sri Rajasinha in the late 1700s. It fell into disuse but was revived in the late 1800s and is now one of the most popular temples in Sri Lanka. It is visited by people of all faiths.

The main temple, which is dedicated to Siva, is built according to the agamas tradition which specifies the method of temple construction and creation of images as well as the means of worship of the deities, philosophical doctrines and meditative practices. The Siva temple faces east, with three pathways around it, and a sacred pond and

Bo-tree in front. It contains the lingam (a representation of the god Shiva) within the main sanctum which, along with the structure above it, is one of the largest in Sri Lanka.



The goddess Durga (photo courtesy of Leon Meerson)

The temple is visited by many for pure devotion but also by those making vows to the gods for something good to happen and by those who wish to place a curse on someone who has wronged them!



(photo courtesy of Leon Meerson)

Munneswaram is about two hours from HPH and affords a pleasant day trip. If we have an indication of interest in advance of a guest's arrival, we could make the necessary arrangements for them to explore this well-known site.

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



TripAdvisor Mobile and Tablet Apps

We are also on [Facebook](#). Bookings can be made on [Trip Advisor](#), [Airbnb](#), [HomeStay](#), [Booking.com](#) and [Agoda](#) as well as by contacting us directly.

Sri Lanka – rated as a top tourist destination for 2011, 2012 & 2013: [The Lonely Planet](#); [Condé Nast Traveller](#); [The New York Times](#); [National Geographic](#)

If you have trouble accessing these links, let us know.

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