



Half-way through the mud-removal at one site



One of the SMALLER earth slips!

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– January 2015 –

The caption on the picture at the top of the first page of our December Newsletter read, “Feast or famine! One of our new water storage sites, augmenting our supply, after a recent downpour.” What was depicted there was, in fact, the large storage unit that supplies water for our garden and for such purposes as vehicle washing with a supply line **completely separate** from our regular potable water supply to HPH. In fact the establishment of a second water supply line is one of the innovations of the third generation van der Poorten who now occupies his ancestral home. Sorry if that picture caption created any confusion folks!

A passing reference to the first van der Poorten who settled in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) has provoked several requests for more details of this man who led a full, diverse and interesting life indeed. I do recall my father telling me that AJ vdp had licensed himself as a land surveyor early in life and he obviously cultivated navigational skills in order to have traversed a good part of the globe in his original effort to settle in Australia with an Irish friend called Delay, prior to the Suez Canal being built. There appears to be yet another piece to the Australian part of the van der Poorten puzzle in that there are five stained-glass panels in the All Saints’ East St. Kilda Anglican church in Melbourne as well as in the Scots Church in that city that were done by AJs father. We are in the process of getting further information, inclusive of pictures, of these pieces. In the meantime, here’s a link to the [All Saints’ Church](#) website and to an [article](#) in the local newspaper about the windows.

We’ve had the busiest Christmas season since we began to operate our paying-guest business and, as usual it has been an unadulterated pleasure dealing with so many people from so many different parts of the world. Of course, that’s easy for me – Emil – to say since it is Arlene who does all the “heavy lifting” at times like these! But, seriously, the term “holiday season” really fits those days from the middle to the end of December. And HPH’s major annual social event – our staff Christmas Party – where a good time is always had by all, was no exception in 2014!



Stained Glass Window, dated 1876, in Scots Church, Melbourne

For the first time, in the early hours of December 8th, we had **two** “devil birds” (Changeable eagles) on the yellow Tabebuia tree calling very loudly to each other, in their typical (eerie!) fashion, so loudly that both Arlene & I woke with a start! Needless to say, when we sought to identify them beyond doubt with a powerful flashlight, they flew off, as they always seem to do, not permitting us that luxury! Oh, well, one of these days In the meantime, we’ll keep hearing them in our neighbourhood as we’ve always done, bringing to mind the various myths and legends attached to these wonderful birds.

December has been the wettest month in memory and I don’t mean “**recent memory**.” The damage to our approach road has been huge and it is only by the herculean efforts of our miniscule work force and the unstinting efforts of our neighbours that not even a day’s access was lost! It was a superb example of co-operative effort with just hand tools delivering the goods. Now the big task of repair begins!

Warm regards and all good wishes for 2015,
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



Tripping the light fantastic at the Staff and Children's Xmas party!

Daytrips from HPH

Arankelle Forest Monastery

This is one of Sri Lanka's less-visited but, nevertheless, very impressive archaeological sites. In fact, used for a very long time, beginning in the 6th Century, this hermitage has no equal in its class in a country with a wealth of sites of historical and archaeological interest.

The ruins occupy a forested hillside and the hermitage's hospital, the moats, stone walls, herbal baths, facilities for the preparation of herbs, meditation halls and a sanitation system enormously sophisticated for that time and age, are easily identifiable.

King Dhatusena, more than 1600 years ago, gifted the facility to the Buddhist clergy and more than a thousand monks were known to occupy the facility at any given time. The approach to the monastery is along a most picturesque path of approximately 2 kms which threads its way through the forest and up the hillside. In addition to the formal buildings comprising an integrated complex, there are

several small rock caves which were once used for shelter and meditation as well. One of the attractions of the Arankelle Monastery is the beautiful landscape spreading out below one as you wend your way up the hill.

The monastery site was rescued from the tropical forest that had taken it over in 1922 and restoration work began twenty years later. Today, more than half a century after that beginning, even more of the ancient complex is emerging as excavation continues.



The hospital or perhaps a medicinal pool?*

The craftsmen of another time have left a wonderful legacy of skill and dedication utilizing the granite hewn out of the site. One has to experience the sight of pillars, walls and floors constructed entirely of this so-hard-to-carve material to appreciate the skill of those who were very obviously engaged in a labour of love, not simply earning their daily bread!

Arankelle, a part of Sri Lanka's shrinking wilderness, is also a wonderful place for the bird-watcher and naturalist and given the peace and quiet that pervades this North Western Province granite-constructed monastery site, it is simply a place not to be missed by anyone valuing what Sri Lanka has to offer!

If a guest is interested, we could arrange for a daytrip to this site along with a picnic lunch.

*photo courtesy of Roger Humphreys

**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.