



The night of the “Boxing Day Injury” (not sustained in a boxing ring!)

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– February 2015 –

As they say, “Feast or Famine!” After probably the wettest December in Sri Lanka’s history we have been hit by a dry spell that has left the ground rock-hard and, in the more clayey areas, cracked. However, despite chilly nights portending more dry weather, we’ve had a few “muggy” ones which seem to promise some much-needed precipitation. Keep your fingers crossed for us!

The primary author of this newsletter had his arm in a sling for the better part of January thanks to a heavy fall, landing on his shoulder when he thought he heard the distinct “pop” of a dislocated shoulder. However, all (sort of) ended well, the emergency folk in the Kurunegala hospital diagnosed nothing overly serious and permitted a return home that night after a “release” had been signed. It is no fun, I can assure you, being driven around and ambulating around with one’s arm in a sling. Not least of the travails is dealing with all the solicitous inquiries! Still not back to normal but am making as much progress as one might expect at this time of life. This little vignette would not be complete without profuse and sincere thanks to our French guests, Guy Dentan, his family and friends who picked yours truly out of the mud along which he’d slid and got him home, keeping his arm in a position that prevented totally excruciating pain.

While a recent attempt at cataloguing our fruit and garden edibles resulted in a list of 43 names, the monkeys’ and giant squirrels’ depredations have resulted in our having to **buy** fruit for our table from the fruit vendors! We’re now brainstorming a (radical) response to that state of affairs.

However, despite the foregoing, all is not doom and gloom and the 8th of January saw a change of President in Sri Lanka, the national relief over which surprised even those of us who did not have a track record of supporting the man or the sorry pass to which he had brought our country! Politicians being politicians, though, we’ve made a vow to

keep the government’s feet to the fire and we hope that by the next Newsletter we’ll have some positive economic news to report. Well, at least the price of fuel has been reduced substantially and the positive impact of the dissipation of the terrible cloud of repression that has hung over this country has been tangible. As if in celebration, our Jade Vine (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*) has produced several bunches of flowers and we’ve been able to save some of them from the palm squirrels!



Jade vine flowers

The pursuit of my grandfather’s and great-grandfather’s work in stained glass continues. The most recent “lead” has come from Australia about a window in an up-country church in Sri Lanka (!). In the “tracing one’s roots” business, it transpired that a recent (English) visitor was descended from the same line of Winters/Wintours/Wynters as my maternal grandfather. It certainly is a “small world” when someone, based on an internet contact, turns up (from England) on holiday in Galagedera, Sri Lanka and finds he shares bloodlines with one of his hosts, going back about 600 years! Who said operating a B&B or Homestay would be a boring business!

Warm regards and all good wishes as we enter the shortest month in the year!

Arlene & Emil

For each booking in the month of February -
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: Kurunegala

Kurunegala was one of the short-term capitals of Sri Lanka, together with Dambadeniya, Panduwasnuwara and Yapahuwa, when foreign invasions made maintaining the capital at Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura a risky proposition and placed the iconic Tooth Relic of Gautama Buddha at risk. It has been known as Hasthisailapura and Athugalpura at various points of its history, and is now the capital of the North Western Province. Large rocks are a distinct feature of the topography of the area, some of which resemble animals. One of the names by which Kurunegala was once known, *Ethugalpura* (Elephant-rock City), is indicative of this fact. *Ethagala* (Elephant rock) rises 700 feet above mean sea level and is the dominant feature of the landscape. A 66-foot tall Samadhi Buddha statue was recently constructed on its highest point and can be reached, if one is interested in the impressive panoramic view of the city and its surroundings, via a flight of steps carved out of the rock or by driving approximately 2 Kms along the Kachcheri Road.



Ethagala (Elephant rock); the Clock Tower

Clock tower: Originally constructed as a memorial to those who fell in World War I, this traditional clock tower in the centre of Kurunegala was re-dedicated to include those who fell in World War II as well.

The cathedral: The headquarters of the Kurunegala Diocese of the Church of Ceylon (Anglican) was constructed during the tenure of the first Bishop of Kurunegala, the Rt. Rev. Lakdasa De Mel, who employed his personal financial resources in its construction. The nave, roof and pinnacles

of the church display the distinct influence of Polonnaruwa and Kandy period architecture.



The cathedral

The Pola: A substantial part of HPH’s vegetables, dry rations, dry fish etc. is purchased at the Kurunegala Pola. Held every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, this urban “country fair” is in the tradition of the village fair of years gone by. In fact, in the matter of operation, little has changed over the decades that these traditional markets have existed. It is a fascinating experience to wander through the array of stalls with independent vendors hawking everything from vegetables, through fruit, dry and fresh fish, and spices to clothing of various descriptions. This is the place for “one-stop shopping”, where time stands still in the matter of “marketing techniques”, and is an experience not to be missed. While all the vendors try hard to entice you to their particular pitch, they are always unfailingly polite. These are rural Sri Lankans at their best engaged in simple commerce with their urban compatriots.



Arlene shopping at her favorite vendor’s stall

If a guest is interested, we could arrange for a daytrip to see the sights of Kurunegala.

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 by [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