



The single candle does NOT mean "second childhood!" is upon the "birthday boy!" (left); Riley Wanigasekera, Terry Winter and Bill Campbell sampling Arlene's cuisine (right)

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– June 2015 –

As May was drawing to a close and the excuse for another party drew near (Emil's 77th birthday which he shares with Queen Victoria – only the day, not the year!), we had glad tidings from Trip Advisor which advised us that we had received their 2015 Certificate of Excellence. The Certificate of Excellence award "honors hospitality businesses that consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews on TripAdvisor. Properties that are awarded the Certificate of Excellence demonstrate hospitality excellence and represent the upper echelon of businesses listed on TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site."



While we believe that this is well-earned recognition for the effort we put into making HPH a "home away from home" for our guests from the No. 1 web organization catering to the needs of those touring the world, the sense that we "must be doing something right" is the biggest payback of this kind of recognition. Of course, the whole team at HPH deserves so much credit for their efforts, particularly since their labours seem to go unsung in their own social circles. I speak here of Pathma, Mallika, Gamini, Senevi and Bisso (and their predecessors) who display so much enthusiasm for what they do so willingly to make HPH the success it is and will continue to be. At the same time we endeavour to constantly reinforce the fact that our (limited) field worker resources contribute equally to that success, even though less visible, and that we are most appreciative of their contribution to HPH's success.

The wet weather we've experienced throughout the month has been a mixed blessing: everything is so green and lush but so are the weeds! And on the debit side a large rubber tree branch did our so-symmetrical *Thal* (Talipot) palm some significant damage. You can quarrel with nature but you aren't going to win any arguments with her so we would best simply grin and bear!

The Samadhi Buddha at Moneragala was completed and officially declared so this month. Particularly given the fact that it is a short drive from here, this magnificent granite statue is something guests at HPH should seriously consider visiting. At over 65 feet in height, it is the largest seated granite Buddha statue in the world. Adding to its serene beauty is its reflection in the large pool of water resting in front of it, carved out of the same enormous granite mass from which the statue was hewn! The statue is in traditional form and leaves nothing to be desired in matters of authenticity or taste. I could go on and on but nothing I can say would do justice to this piece of the rock carvers' art. It must be seen to be truly appreciated. In relatively close proximity to this statue is the up-to-now much better known Ridi Vihare from where, legend has it, came the silver that financed the completion of the largest and best known *dagoba* in Sri Lanka's capital of 2500 years ago, Anuradhapura. Both these places of religious significance make for a comfortable morning's outing from HPH. See the June 2014 newsletter for photos and more information.

Incidentally, the birthday celebration with friends old and new and members of the diminishing van der Poorten and Winter clans in Sri Lanka, was an event at which the traditional "good time was had by all!" Something unique about these parties is the fact that everyone seems to celebrate well **and** wisely, though the more caustic commentators among us attribute the latter to the fact that the participants are too old to do anything but celebrate "wisely!"



Diesel-powered road roller at work in early December 2014

The picture that appears above might seem like a strange choice. However, those who've been to HPH will remember, not kindly I'm sure, the public road supposed to provide access to our home and dozens of other rural families, particularly that section leading up to the elbow bend with the clumps of yellow bamboo on the side. That road under the road-roller is the very same one that was tough going for the toughest of all-terrain vehicles until we decided to take legal action against the local municipal authority. Strange what can be achieved in less than a week once years of seemingly terminal political deafness is placed before a court of law! Mind you, as they say, "it ain't over till the fat lady sings" and the legal proceedings haven't drawn to a close yet. However, I don't think we are going to be isolated for days on end from now and visitors will be able to make it to HPH without recourse to a moon buggy or something similar!

While we don't want the surroundings of our Home looking, even in part, like some commercial horticultural operation, it seems like unobtrusive identification boards on some of the trees in and around HPH might be something to consider. We've had requests for something of this nature for a while now and while it does mean another task for our already thinly-stretched resources, we've considered putting name boards on those trees the identity of which many visitors, particularly from temperate parts of the world, seem interested. What do **you** think, dear reader?

June has what might be considered the most important religious festival for those who live in what is today considered the cradle of Buddhism – The Posa *poya*, celebrated on June 2nd. This full moon day is when it is believed that the Arahata Mahinda thera, the son of the great Emperor Asoka of India, first acquainted Sri Lankans, through their king Devanampiyatissa, with the teachings of Prince Siddhartha Gautama. It is particularly a time for contemplation of what the Buddha taught and how those tenets can be applied to modern day life whose pace is often seen as too hectic for philosophical thought and the more important things in life.

And on that note we shall leave you for another month, dear readers.

Warm regards,
Arlene and Emil

For each booking in June -

**a vanilla bean from our first crop
in addition to the "sampler pack"
of 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

Plants of interest at HPH – Lovi-lovi (*Flacourtia inermis*)

This tree is widely planted in Sri Lanka in the mid-country. Its origins have been ascribed to Amboine in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines! However, the account by J-W Bennett (*Ceylan [sic] and its capabilities*, 1843) that the Dutch brought it from Amboine seems most likely. As well as being a beautiful tree, it produces masses of fruit. Though the ripe fruit is too sour to eat fresh, they can be made into pickles, jellies, jams and wine. Lovi-lovi jam is one of Arlene's specialties and it is not made commercially despite its great flavour as a jam and the commonness of the tree. So a visit to HPH is your only means to try this!



Lovi-lovi: The ripe fruits and the new leaves.

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



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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