



Flamboyant (*Delonix regia*) flower from one of the trees in front of HPH

## Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

- June 2016 -

Last month's Newsletter opened with a reference to perhaps the single most important day in the Buddhist calendar, *Wesak*. In June Sri Lankan Buddhists celebrate *Poson* which commemorates the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The tone of the two celebrations tends to be different: *Wesak* is noisy and clamorous while *Poson* seems to convey the peace and tranquility that the philosophy of Prince Siddhartha epitomizes.

May saw unprecedented torrential rains that all but inundated most of Sri Lanka, with the hill country facing the added burden of substantial earth slides which took dozens of lives. Our share of the unbelievably dreary weather, however, paled into insignificance when the full extent of the tragedy that had befallen Sri Lanka, particularly the poorer sections of its population, became evident.

On the "home front," Arlene continues her slow but steady recovery from major cardio-thoracic surgery and I appear to have arrived at the dosage of "rat poison" (Warfarin) that satisfies the cardiac electrophysiologist that I see. (Don't you love that important-sounding title?!)

HPH has a new addition to our household, *Kikki* (simply "female pup" in Sinhala). Given the apparent lineage of the canine, replete with the beginnings of a corkscrew tail, anything more grandiose would be a bit much, we thought! We now have 114 in the way of "rice hounds:" **two** "Heinz 57s," if you will forgive the labored attempt at "punny" humour!. "*Natta*" our canine-in-residence for lo these many years has taken a very dim view of what she sees as competition and continues sulking despite our efforts to

convince her that her position has not been usurped. The intruder doesn't help her case by trying to harass *N* into play of one description or another by nipping at the older dog with her needle-sharp teeth!

Typically, *Mallika* has taken it upon herself to play fairy godmother to the new arrival, notwithstanding the fact that she saved twin baby hares, seemingly abandoned by their mother in our front yard, whom she saved from *Natta's* less-than-tender attention. No sooner they are fit to take care of themselves, she will release them into the wild, far away from our *Natta* who would otherwise make short work of them.

We continue in our efforts to add more choices in the way of self-guided walks around HPH and discovered, near *Gamini's* Bench, a *lena*, a rock overhang. Behind its porcupine-friendly opening aperture appears to be a quite substantial cave. The material of which the boulder is constituted is rock that weathers easily (over many thousands of years) and our inexperienced eyes cannot discern a drip ledge which is the usual sign of humans having used it for shelter in the dim distant past. As with everything on the face of HPH, we have no intention of



Mallika & Kikki

“gussying up” this new find, leaving it as is with, perhaps, marginally easier access to its interior for those prepared to face whatever creatures might still be in residence! Our “Female, field workforce” comprising the three Menikas - Bisomenika, Heen Menika and Podi Menika - had a little bit of excitement when they began clearing the walking trail adjacent to the *Lena* and a wild pig nearly ran them off the path in its efforts to avoid human contact! They weren’t exaggerating about its size, either, because its hoof-prints were quite substantial!

The new network of walking trails in the vicinity of Gamini’s Bench and the source of our water supply are very pleasant indeed with a canopy of vegetation, virtually no undergrowth, and relatively gentle gradients.

The water lilies and lotus we have introduced into our little network of back-up water storage facilities are coming on well and should, quite soon, provide Arlene with an even wider selection of flowers for her vases. We’ve also been trying to obtain fingerlings of *Tilapia mossambica*, Sri Lanka’s primary fresh-water food-fish, and a delectable addition to any meal, from the Department of Aquatic Resources but the person we seek to contact has not been at his desk because of the rain. If/when we succeed, we will be able to add fish to the home-grown fruit and vegetables for which HPH is developing quite a reputation.

And, speaking of fruit, we’ve had a bumper mango crop on our *Ambalavi*, *Parrot*, *Karthu-* and *Vella-Colomban* trees and are hard put to save the excess in the form of frozen fruit, preserves and juice, a good problem to have as you might well imagine. We are also exploring the possibility of marketing jams, jellies, chutneys and other forms of preserved fruit. If/ when we successfully negotiate the tortuous path that confronts us and obtain official sanction, HPH preserves, sans preservatives and artificial colouring of any description, will be available not only to guests but on grocery store shelves as well.



A small selection of Seela's spoons

Thanks to the renewal of a friendship that began before the Sri Lanka’s “Che Guevara” youth insurrection of 1971, we have the opportunity of making reference to a selection of traditional coconut shell serving spoons with “*Atteriya*” (*Murraya exotica*) hardwood handles. They are made, with great attention to detail and quality, by one who learnt the craft, and obviously did so very well, while he was incarcerated for a significant length of time in one of the large internment camps set up by the late Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s government of the time! There is a whole book to be written about the circumstances under which Emil van der Poorten and Seeladasa Delankawalage first met and their subsequent friendship over nearly half a century. Perhaps, it is worthy of relating, in instalments in future newsletters! For now, though, an illustration of a small sample of what “Seela” is producing in his sunset years will have to suffice!

To end on a sad note, Pathma, who visitors will remember fondly as being in control of our Open Hearth Kitchen, has had to retire because of poor health that doesn’t permit her climbing up the footpath from her home to work at HPH every day. The good news is that she **is** on the road to recovery, though it is unlikely that she will return to HPH. We will miss her sorely but will be in touch with her from time to time.

With all good wishes!

Arlene & Emil

**For June we’ll continue our very popular  
“Sampler pack”  
of HPH-grown and -roasted coffee  
and  
the “Surprise Basket” of HPH “goodies,” that appears  
to delight visitors as they take their leave of us and  
HPH!**

#### **Halgolla Plantation Home**

- now ranked #8/241 B&Bs in Kandy on Trip Advisor
- Certificate of Excellence 2015 from Trip Advisor
  - rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri Lanka 2013
- recommended by [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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Use the widget above\* to check for availability at HPH and to make your booking directly with us. Please note that there is a minimum stay of 2 nights for each booking.

If you don't see it, refresh your browser and make sure that your browser is set to "allow blocked content".

Please note that there is a **minimum stay of 2 nights for each booking** and we do **not** accept credit cards. Payment accepted in US\$, Sri Lankan rupees or any other major currency.

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

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