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Typewritten electronic contributions for the FAO CASA Gazette are welcome. These can be in English, French, Italian or Spanish - articles, poems, drawings, photographs, etc. in fact anything interesting that staff members and/or their families in Rome or the field may like to contribute. No anonymous material will be accepted, and the Editor reserves the right to choose and/or reject material that is not in keeping with the ethics of the Organization. Send contributions electronically to the Editor at jill.stevenson@fao.org or leave signed copies with the COOP Office on the ground floor of Building E. The deadline for editorial material is due on the 1st of the month preceding the date of issue.

The Editor may schedule articles according to the priorities and editorial requirements of the FAO Staff COOP.

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5 days in 5 Terre

by Jane Russell

Cinque Terre refers to a group of 5 little picturesque towns perched on the cliffs of the Ligurian coastline near La Spezia. It is a Unesco World Heritage site, and a national park. The towns are: Monterosso-al-mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola {first photo} and Riomaggiore.

Cinque Terre is a place you must go to at least once, and take your camera! So, what's there to do? Where do you stay?



And how to get around?

Well, the first priority is to book some accommodation, especially if you want to go in Summer; as it gets booked out quickly. For a stay of 5 or more days you may want to investigate sharing a house or apartment, rather than a hotel.

For my holiday, with 3 friends, we rented an apartment in Monterosso, because it's the largest of the 5 towns and has a decent beach. It was useful having the option to cater for ourselves, and the washing machine was very much appreciated.

How to get around? Well, there is a little train that goes to each town and as far as La Spezia, and there is an option to get a weekly ticket for unlimited daily travel.

There are also boats, but they don't stop at Corniglia as it's not on the coast but on top of a cliff {see next photo}.

You can also walk, as many people enjoy the walking trails between the towns, and some do the whole 5 towns in one day (not me, I should add).



What is there to do there? – Well, apart from going for a swim and a sunbathe, you can go for a hike. We did both. You can visit each town, and then go further afield. We took a boat trip to Portovenere {third photo} which included a cruise of its islands: Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto {fourth photo}.



A beautiful day out.



The boat trip enabled us to see each of the Cinque Terre towns from the sea. So it was very much a photo opportunity. A couple of the towns looked better from a distance too, so you couldn't see the peeling paint and run downness so evident when close up. Riomaggiore {photo follows} was a case in point. Others, of course may disagree.



The town that I found the most photogenic was Vernazza {see next photo}



We also did a day trip by train to La Spezia – that was not a big success. Not very pretty, but lots of posh shops and not at all touristy. It had an amazingly ugly modern cathedral, which resembles a cement football stadium.

One day we purchased a Cinque Terre card (allowing us entry into the Parco Nazionale) and walked the 'Via d'Amore' which is an easy, level coastal walk from Riomaggiore to Manarola. The next part of the walk was closed due to a landslide, so we went to Corniglia by train, but failed to find the start of the walk from here to Vernazza. However, with our Cinque Terre cards we had free bus rides from the railway station

to Corniglia central, saving ourselves 365 steps straight up! {photo}



On the day we left, a Saturday, Monterosso had a beachside market, which was outside the railway station, so convenient to peruse while we were waiting for our train. After a week of beautiful sunny weather, the sky was grey and gloomy. The wind came up and the day looked dire. Lucky we were leaving. Photos of Monterosso-al-mare on a sunny



day with its sandy beach. Next on the day we left.



Lovely place overall, well worth the visit. Highly recommended ■

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SIXTH EDITION OF RUN FOR FOOD Terme di Caracalla Stadium Sunday 16 October 2011 – 10.00 hrs

*by Edith Mahabir
FAO Staff Coop WFD Coordinator*



The countdown has started for this year's Run for Food Race – in less than a month the historic centre of the city of Rome will be peacefully invaded by a multitude of runners, and walkers testifying their commitment to this humanitarian race ... the Race against hunger and malnutrition. The number of participants has grown steadily over the years and it is hoped that they will more than double this time. The ***Banda della Polizia (Police Band)*** of Rome will play at the start of the Run for Food.

The Race is organized by the Gruppo Sportivo Bancari Romani on behalf of FAO, WFP, IFAD and Bioversity Internation with the sponsorship of the President of Italy, Roma Capitale, Province of Rome UN Federal Credit Union, YUNGA and FAO

Staff Coop.

The Horn of Africa needs our continued support, we have all read of the ongoing famine in parts of Kenya – a dramatic development indeed. The advancing desertification in some areas and adverse climatic changes, which are becoming manifest throughout the globe, do not permit us to slacken in our resolve to do all that is necessary to eradicate the scourge of hunger and malnutrition where they are rife. Affected populations need our assistance to allow them to successfully grow the crops and staples to meet their daily nutritional and long term needs.

In the midst of much scepticism those of us who have been working for our Organizations for 15 years or more know that they have made a difference, that with

the technical assistance, funding and guidance some peoples have become self-sufficient, others are on the way to achieving it but that there are still too many others that have yet to be given the opportunity and placed in a position to grasp it. It does not have to be in a big way with large scale projects requiring sophisticated equipment, and complex procedures and infrastructure.

The Telefood programme has demonstrated that micro projects involving the local populations are equally effective. The micro funding provided goes a long way in assisting small communities to grow their own food, raise their own chickens and livestock, breed fish, shrimp in the rice fields, etc. This sufficient for their families' needs with some also for sale to generate income. During the past two years Telefood contributions have gone to Haiti for the provision of fruit trees and school gardens. It is a certainty that the fruits of these projects will be bountiful in future if

continued and nurtured and is also a very valuable form of education for the youths. Think of the pride and satisfaction of local communities such as Les Abricots when they will be able to sell their produce to the local supermarkets and shops, producing also marmalades and other bottled products. This Comune has benefitted from contributions from our FAO/WFP Caribbean Cultural Group (under the umbrella of the FAO Staff Coop) through its fund raising charity sales, art exhibitions and dinner-dances. It does not take much to make a difference ...

So, let us make the difference this year. Show your commitment to fight hunger and malnutrition in the world and especially in the critical zones of the Horn of Africa. It will only take a simple gesture ... complete the registration form, take it down to the Office of the FAO Staff Coop and pay the fee. You will receive a receipt which will entitle you to receive the 2011 Run for Food T-shirt as a token of your support.

At the Stadium – other added attractions on 16 October



Photo credit FAO/G. Napolitano





If you will not be running or walking in the Race, there are also other ways of joining and supporting the Run for Food. Are your kids too small to run or walk? Bring them along to the Caracalla Stadium where there will be live entertainment for the little ones – our **Clown Lenny** was a big hit with them last time. In addition the **Almost Famous acrobatic Hiphop dance group** should be performing – remember they won the European hiphop championship in 2007.

The 2011 Cultural Show at the Stadium will also feature the *Orchestra Giovanile of Monte Mario* which will perform an ad hoc repertoire on solidarity. They have performed in the Campidoglio on the occasion of the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Italy and also in the Vatican. They will be playing from 11.30 to 13.00 hrs.

There will naturally also be our usual Ethnic Food stands with savoury dishes from around the world, assorted sweets and cakes, Porchetta from Ariccia, a Bar Service with Coffee, ethnic drinks and soft drinks. So no need to hurry home to prepare lunch – stay and sample delicious food right there. If you are vegetarian - no problem there will be lots of dishes for you to choose from. Ask those who came in the past, our chefs are really exceptional! And our prices are quite reasonable. **All the proceeds from the sale of the food and drinks will be donated to the Telefood projects in the Horn of Africa.**

We count on your support, bring along your families, friends, acquaintances, schoolmates and visitors. You can make the difference in the lives of many less fortunate persons ■



Time after time

There are forms of co-operation that almost become a new tradition

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DE BESI - DI GIACOMO

VERCON: ICT Strengthening Agricultural Research and Extension in Armenia

by Nara Yaralyan, ASRC of the MoA/FAO VERCON Project in Armenia



Over the past decades, the idea of harnessing the skyrocketing potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) to fuel the most development-oriented areas of human activities, such as research and education, has become increasingly dominant throughout the world. In Armenia, the joint efforts of the Government and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations have resulted in the establishment of AGRO.AM Network

(www.agro.am) – a nationwide web platform for communication and exchange of information and data between the leading national agricultural research and extension institutions and professionals. Armenia is now a successful example of having up-to-date information and communication technologies effectively serving professional needs of research, education and extension communities, thus contributing also to agriculture and rural development in the country.

In 2009, to support the initiative of the Government of Armenia aimed at improving the agricultural advisory services provided to farmers, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of the RA, launched the Project for Establishment of a Virtual Extension and Research Information and Communication Network (VERCON) in Armenia. Under the project, it was intended to create a common web-based information sharing and communication platform for Armenian research and advisory institutions equipping them with efficient networking tools and capacities to help improve quality of the advisory services provided to farmers.



FAO contributed its broad and valuable experience and expertise in the development of the AgroWeb International Network for Central and Eastern Europe (<http://www.agrowebcee.net>), Armenia has participated in since early 2000s, and VERCON (Virtual Extension and Research Communication Network) conceptual model (<http://km.fao.org/vercon/>), successfully adopted by several countries having VERCON as a

conceptual pivot for their national agricultural research and extension communication networks.

To effectively meet communication needs of the end-users, AGRO.AM has been designed and developed in consultation with the user community represented by key agricultural research, extension and education institutions in Armenia.

According to the Director of the Shirak Agriculture Support Marz Center, Mr. Jivan Aslanyan, the above approach resulted in the institutions successfully using new technology.

- Thanks to the FAO VERCON project, since October 2010 the Agriculture Support Center in Shirak region runs its own web site. From the very outset, we have been doing our best to populate the web site with content farmers and agricultural processors are most interested in, - says Mr. Aslanyan. Local and regional news, communities' profiles, publications on effective farm management, farming technologies, crop production techniques, harvesting, and post-harvest crop management, along with an electronic billboard to advertise products and services for sale attract 150-200 unique visitors daily. On behalf of our staff and farmers, I thank the project team for successful collaboration and good job they did. I'm hopeful that this initiative will get proper follow-up.



As one of the most evident signs of success, the Armenian and international professionals involved in the development of AGRO.AM Network as well as the user community point out that the scope of the FAO project initially aimed to establish a pilot network of five institutions (the Agriculture Support Republican (National) Center; Agriculture Support Marz (Local) Centers in Ararat and Shirak regions, Research Center of Vegetable, Melon and Industrial Crops, and the Armenian State

Agrarian University), but it has been expanded in the course of the implementation to include all Agriculture Support Centers offering advisory and information services to farmers and agricultural producers in ten provinces (marzes) of Armenia.

Technically supported and coordinated by the Agriculture Support Republican Center, currently the network consists of 13 institutional web sites linked together under the umbrella of a common national-level AGRO.AM platform. Eleven Agriculture Support Centers under the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the State Agrarian University of Armenia and the Research Center of Vegetable, Melon and Industrial Crops are involved in the network, which allows them sharing news, electronic publications, advisory and educational materials and resources, research data and other information on the web.

- We have built a multifunctional network that connects existing resources and creates new capacity for the research and extension institutions in Armenia to effectively fulfill their tasks and meet the needs of their client communities – says Mr. Mkrtich Muradyan, the Director of the Agriculture Support Republican Center. ASRC has been involved in the project as a key project implementation agency leading the process of developing network and building strong partnership between the member institutions. Now we continue to provide necessary technical support and advice to the member organizations and are keen to take the network forward in terms of both involving more members and developing more functionality.

It is noteworthy that AGRO.AM platform serves not only as a web-umbrella for the member institutions but also as a gateway leading the Armenian professionals to the international agricultural community. What actually makes it a “gateway” to international web community and resources is that AGRO.AM platform is integrated into the FAO-supported AgroWeb International Network for Central and Eastern Europe and serves as a national-language version of the AgroWeb-Armenia English-language portal (www.agrowebcee.net/awam).

As part of the AgroWeb Network, AGRO.AM provides direct one-click access to the national agricultural web portals of 29 Eastern and Central European and post-soviet countries participating in the AgroWeb initiative. In addition, through AgroWeb Armenian professionals gain easy access to a number of agricultural thematic networks (APRICOT Network, CENTAUR Veterinarian Network, NACEE Network of Aquaculture Centers, etc.) incorporated within the FAO-supported European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (ESCORENA, <http://www.escorena.net/>).

All participating institutional web sites within the AGRO.AM Network share the same technology, architecture, design and functionalities. This allows timely and effective information, data and knowledge sharing between the member institutions and their stakeholders. In addition, it helps build a professional community of web-editors and information management specialists working at the leading agricultural institutions of Armenia, which is also considered to be one of the most valuable and promising achievements.

To support this process, a number of workshops, training sessions and face-to-face trainings and consultations on information literacy and web content management have been provided to the representatives of the stakeholder institutions by the FAO professionals, international and national consultants.

I'm sure that in the course of time the number of users and stakeholders will significantly increase, - says Mr. Ashot Voskanyan, the Project National Coordinator. This network has all potential to become the main source of information and knowledge not only for researchers, educators, decision-makers, and agricultural businesses, but also for farmers, who are the key stakeholders. Development of information society with proper involvement of rural areas is of high social and economic importance. Thus, investing money and other resources in this kind of project will be repaid with time ■

Malta and the King Long Invasion

by Peter Steele

When you have just 300 square kilometres of land in the Central Mediterranean located less than 100 km south of Sicily; you can expect to be invaded. This can be hostile or friendly – it may depend upon the whim of a powerful neighbour; the projection of imperial presence by those who rule the seas or, as times change, invitations sent to the world-at-large to come and enjoy the delights of a sparkling seascape, the gem of a sunset over the capital city and, this thing about invasions, the mesh of history left behind by those who came, those who stayed and those who continue to arrive. For more than 7,000 years of recorded history, the archipelago of Malta has experienced them all. The King Long invasion remains simply one more in a long-list of would-be occupiers, but this one, moreover, has ‘Made in China’ written all over it; so, its unusual.



Bus services Bedford. Malta has the best local bus service in the EU; and it's due to get better mid-2011 with re-organization and contracted management. Locals and tourists alike pile into the local bus fleet – which until now has been dominated by mainly 40-50 year old British-built coaches. Surely the last commercial fleet of its kind in the world. Bedford – after an English town - was once a marque to be cherished.

When in Malta – take the bus

Arrive at Malta's one and only international airport (in the centre of the main island -Malta) and the chances are that you will take the number 8 bus into town. Why pay 20 for that taxi when the bus offers the same route and the same traffic jams at a fraction of the price (*well, at 47 centissimi, well below a 'fraction of the price'*). Then you get to walk from the bus station into the capital city Valletta – now in large part a pedestrian precinct – and, if you are staying over in Sliema where all the easily

accessible hotels are located, you get to take the best ride in the islands to get there; you catch the Valletta-Sliema ferry with the heritage views of Manoel Island and the ancient but massive fortifications that ring Marsamzett Harbour - you get that sense of history that the port provides. These are some of Valletta's best pleasure waters and ringed with yacht marinas. The Grand Harbour is on the other side of Valletta, and has been a commercial port since Roman times; it's where the cruise liners dock.



Old & new buses. The new King Long alongside the elderly Leyland Comet reflecting changes in style and design, but also the dramatic changes in materials technologies, passenger environment and road safety provided by 40 years of development; the relative mechanical simplicity of the one compared to the electro-sophistication of the other.

Chinese invasion

Until 3 July 2011, chances were that the number 8 bus would be a 40-50 year old British built bus painted in bright orange and looking like something that had just driven out of a transport museum. Sure, clean and presentable and driven with skill and tenacity (and sometimes eccentricity), but the historical images belie the relative discomfort, lack of space and environmental sensitivities of the modern day; and, for Transport Malta, this was no longer acceptable. The King Long bus is on its way and, by the time you are reading this, the invasion will have been complete, with the iconic British buses with their rectangular edges, high waistlines, small windows and round headlights largely consigned to the scrap heap of history.

The invasion represents a de facto first for the Xiamen King Long United Automotive Industry Company Limited in the bus networks of the European Union; it is a commercial coup to cherish. Note the brand, identify the logo (a stylized 'L' within an oval loop) and follow it into a neighbourhood near you soon – it's coming. This is China successfully selling into one of the most challenging bus markets in the world; and from a company that 25 years ago did not even exist.

Traditional bus services

The iconic bus of Maltese fame is almost as dead as the dodo; its days were numbered from the time that the first King Long replacement buses began to arrive during the first part of the year. Tourist industries apart the colour, images and novelty of the old mainly British-built fleet are due to become just another memory of times past. Sure, it's great to project national or city images that identify – ever travelled on a steam train in Russia, taken the cable car with that view of the bay in San Francisco or seen London from the top of a double-decker bus – probably yes to some of these, but also more likely as a visitor/tourist. Transport systems thrive on modern technologies and, notwithstanding the nostalgia for things past (well, with some people anyway), few would chose old in preference to new. Old is for the museums, for those who cannot afford new or for the classic enthusiast with time on his/her hands.

The rather conventional-looking King Long bus has been in Malta since 2001 and under more serious evaluation - route testing and driver training - since last year and with its modern suspension, engine, transmission and passenger interface – entry/exit, seats, spaciousness, air-



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Fordson Thames. This fine old lady is even older than the majority fleet; and there can be few Thames bus or truck derivatives still plying the roads of the world. Hopefully, those tourist routes that will continue to use the 'oldies' will retain a selection of makes and models.

conditioning, real-time information displays and more – it has easily out-performed the older buses in cost-efficiency, comfort and reliability; and so it should do.

Can you remember back to your first bus ride or to the first car you owned? Probably *yes*, but then again, may be *no – not really*. A ride in a traditional Maltese bus quickly takes you back to those early days. Did buses always shake like this one, were the steps always this steep, the seats covered in itchy brushed cloth and the windows so difficult to open? Where are all the hand-holds? And so on. Memories sometimes play tricks on you.

With their fuel-efficient low-emission diesel engines, automatic transmission, quietness and tolerant suspension, the King Longs have handled the mixed quality of Maltese pavements well. Remember, this is not your typical spacious (and rich) German city suburb, but a country of little more than narrow lanes where there are few straight stretches, few two-lane roads and many corners, roundabouts and intersections; where high car ownership means congestion everywhere. Whether for public transport or the local school run – and Maltese buses provide both – the quality of this particular change will be one of *'service over design'*. And, no matter the design, technological progress and engineering quality

of the new buses, failure to deliver improved transport will ultimately reflect upon the brand.

Xiamen King Long United Automotive Industry Company Limited

From small beginnings in the mid-1980s, the Chinese/Taiwanese Company *'King Long'* has risen to dominance in the Chinese coach market; and, as the home market began to stagnate, a policy shift led to exporting. Manufacturing capacity dominates and annual output of around 13 000 large and medium-size buses enabled the company to comfortably handle the 174 buses required for Malta (i.e. less than a week's work). *Imagine.*

Export sales began in 2000 and, 10 years later, >6 600 vehicles have been sent to foreign markets. Buses and coaches have been sold into countries around the world; from Singapore to Saudi Arabia and from Argentina to India. VCA certification provided that portal into the European market that King Long has been prompt to exploit – with sales into Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia and now Malta. But whilst importers sell a handful of buses into discrete markets, Malta provides that window of opportunity; a small compact country in which bus transport will remain important and, one moreover; that can now be considered *'King Long Country'*.

Market success has come from cost-efficiencies and selling costs that comfortably undercut those of other mainstream bus manufacturers, but King Long has also taken on the partnerships that have provided for engineering excellence in design and manufacture, fitting European or US-made engines, transmissions and auxiliary fittings – brakes, steering, lighting, environmental control and more – that represent the world's best products; whatever the client specifies. The badge up front may feature 'King Long' by name, but underneath that modern coach body is 'International Bus Vehicles Inc.'

Arriva and the Malta contract

Put out to international tender, the contract to provide improved bus services across the country was won by Arriva Malta Ltd; and the company was prompt to place an order for 174 new Chinese-made buses as the basis for the modern national fleet. Transport Malta representing government provided the vision of the Twenty-first century transport network required.

Part technological change, part systems improvement and part human development these demands will be channelled into a 10 -

year management contract for Arriva Malta to take on the 'Fairy Godmother' of all challenges; and much of this will come from the impact of recruitment, training, customer interfacing and public impact.

Follow the critique and comments in the Times of Malta, and there are few locals who defend the 'take-it-or-leave-it' attitude of current drivers; and questions have been raised for the ability of Arriva Malta to change attitudes and to deliver on quality driving and on-board services and, at the same time to provide for safety, defensive and eco-driving techniques and customer care.

Before Arriva Malta cropped up, most buses have been driver-owned and operated (albeit within a unified public transport system), but this will now change. The Arriva Malta buses will replace a large part of the estimated 500 buses that make up the current national fleet. The new buses fleet will include 125 12 - metre buses and 49 9 - metre buses. Two 8 - metre buses have also been ordered for travel around Valletta and for specialized wheelchair access.

The Chinese buses will be augmented with 10 UK-made hybrid buses capable of carrying 40



Arriva bus. The modern replacement in final livery and appearance, the Arriva King Long represents a break from the past – colours, comfort, information and reliability replacing quirkiness, traditions and familiarity; a case of functionality beats experience. Changes in service, however, will continue to depend largely upon the performance of the driver, and many of these appear to be as eccentric as their buses.



Valetta Bus Station. The country's key road transport node; linking the capital with everywhere else. Looking north into the city with the recently demolished city gate clearly visible. The buses currently line up around the Triton Fountain, but all this is changing as part of new developments to enhance the entrance to the city and further separate people and traffic. Like the buses and their colours, these are historical images to be appreciated.

people, and there is also the possibility of 'bendy-buses' being explored – the articulated buses popular on high density routes and/or long distance cross-city routes in Europe. Bendy-buses, however, tend to need space in which to operate, a point picked up by correspondents to the Times of Malta with their critique and moans about change. Another correspondent focused upon the advantages of travelling by open truck – funny he was not.

The new King Long buses will make up about 66 percent of the Maltese fleet, and here it is that Arriva Malta will survive or fail on the basis of the services provided by their drivers and those who support them at key nodes in the system. As an international transport company operating >16 300 buses Arriva has the resources and experience required; and, moreover, sub-contracting in Italy and the UK for ticketing and passenger control, real-time information systems, staff/driver training and more should provide sufficient margin to get things right first time round in Malta. And if they don't – and if mistakes are made - then more adverse comments will pour into the Times of Malta.

Challenges in design

You cannot satisfy all of the people all of the time, but with public transport you had better have some good ideas of what people actually want. Malta and King Long buses are no exception. It is not sufficient to simply offer value for money - and each 12-metre buses has cost around US\$180 000 and comes with a five - year warranty - so this has been a fair deal where vehicles are concerned. The bus markets in Europe will be following this one too, and the Chinese manufacturers will be learning fast to enable them to stay abreast of the competition. It's one thing to sell into the Middle East or Latin America, but quite another to sell into 'quality Europe'.

So it is that the Arriva buses have been fitted out with Cummings engines and ZF six-shift transmissions, and have chassis and body designs that meet EU certification and, by so doing, this has enabled the company to raise the quality of manufacture and target creative specifications that will eventually benefit other markets. Malta represents a springboard opportunity for similar sales elsewhere in the EU.

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In an evaluation of the 12-metre bus prior to delivery, however, there were comments in the national press concerning the new colours and visual style - turquoise and off-white in wavy lines that provide an image of sea or surf – incidental or deliberate for an island country? Thus, the traditional bright orange with the red waist/bonnet line of the existing fleet is finished. Colour is important – with issues of ownership and preferences, but colours also come and go with changes in social and community fashion. Not so long ago Maltese buses were colour coded by routes and areas; that too has long gone. Gozo Island buses have also enjoyed different colours to those in Malta Island.

But other critique was more prosaic or reactionary – take your pick – centred upon functional seating (which was not found particularly comfortable), seat layout, passageways and access to the mid-cabin emergency exit. The latter has fold-up seats that block this doorway when in use – but this remains EU legal. Roof hand grabs are transparent to provide for advertising, roof to seat hand rail fittings seemed light for the task required of them and, interestingly, the conundrum of an internal full-width radiator grill at foot level across the back of the bus and in front of the five rear seats. You need to be nimble of foot to access these seats then.

It's hard to build a reputation for quality when starting out, but look back 50 years and note the rise of East Asian vehicle industries – Japan, followed by South Korea and Taiwan, then Malaysia and Thailand with China entering main-stage from the wings. And the correspondents to the Times of Malta have been quick to rubbish build quality – buses that expect to look *'tatty'* within months of normal use and, the clincher, that the 1960 Bedford buses provide more space and are more comfortable. You take your choice on this one –; get there soon and try them both.

End note

So, what about the fate of those elderly British-made buses? All destined to be broken up for scrap? Well, probably the majority, for markets for 40 year old buses with the steering wheel on the wrong side are difficult to find. Given the importance of the tourist to Malta, a handful of popular island routes will probably continue to offer a mix of these traditional old buses in their original colours, but then tourist markets are notoriously fickle and the next generation of sun-seekers will probably no more chase these images than seek access to the remnants of the national rail network – and this closed down in the early 1930s. *That's life – that's technological change* ■



Arriva arriving. The King Longs began arriving in April this year; and the images on the dock at Laboratory Wharf emphasised the changes due in appearance and reality. For a small and densely populated country, efficient road transport is fundamental; the challenge for Arriva will be one of systems management when handling those 31 million passengers each year.

A TRIP TO BRUGES

by Marion Bernabè



My sister, brother-in-law and I spent 3 days in Bruges in Northern Belgium at the end of July. Although the weather was grey and drizzly, as it often is in Western Flanders, we were fascinated by the little city, sometimes known as the “Venice of the North”.

The mediaeval town surrounds a central market square (“Grot Markt”). Soaring above it stands the Belfry tower, beneath which textiles and spices were sold in the Middle Ages. Opposite are the buildings where the original cloth Guilds of mediaeval Bruges were housed. Close to this grand market square is another, Burg, with several amazing and beautiful buildings of historic interest, among which the Town Hall, the old Recorder’s

house with its gilt decorations and the Basilica of the Holy Blood.

Although the basilica is the oldest church in Bruges there are several other churches worth visiting, particularly the Church of Our Lady which contains a small Madonna and child sculpted by Michelangelo, one of the only three of his works outside Italy (one in St. Petersburg and the other in the Louvre in Paris).

Bruges is small and easily visited on foot (all the streets are cobbled). However, a canal boat trip is a “must”. Picturesque buildings line the canals (see picture 1) resembling those along the canals of Amsterdam, painted in various colours and with the traditional Dutch stepped



roofs .In fact, Flanders was part of the Netherlands until the early Nineteenth century so Dutch influence is strong and Dutch is the first language here. However, nearly everyone we met spoke perfect English!

The food is excellent! The local speciality is mussels with chips which appear on every menu. We didn't try them ourselves but ate lots of other tasty dishes – and of course the chocolate! Anyone who loved the film “Chocolat” as I did will remember the fantastic concoctions made of chocolate displayed in the windows of Juliette Binoche's shop. In Bruges, every other shop is a “chocolatier” – it is difficult to pass them by! The beer is good too!

While we were there we visited a typical Flanders village 4 km outside Bruges called Damme. You can walk there along the canal path or travel by paddle boat .It is also very popular with cyclists. We

decided to walk, passing a traditional windmill on the way (see picture 2). The village has its own quaint market square which has remained unaltered since mediaeval times.

We also splashed out on a horse and carriage ride. It was quite expensive and “touristy”, but it did take us to an area of Bruges we could easily have missed otherwise-the Minnewater Park which is a beautiful, tranquil place with picturesque bridges, a lovely lake and a historic convent.

Some people we met in Bruges told us they had spent Christmas there one year. It must have been magical with the snow. All the streets are decorated and there is an ice sculpture exhibition too. People skate on those parts of the canals which are frozen and there is a wonderful Christmas market in the central square. That will be something to think about for the future.... ■

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The FAO Staff Artists Corner

Mrs Suzette Grant a top painter of fine art reproductions

by Flavia Carbonetti



Reproduction of "Fisherman" by Peter Severin Kroyer
Size cm 100 x 80 - oil on canvas

Art reproduction dates back to the woodblock illustrations of the Fifteenth century. In the Sixteenth, the great Raphael was so impressed by the possibilities of copper engraving that he issued some prints from his own designs. By the end of the Nineteenth, Currier & Ives had flooded the U.S with a choice of 7 500 hand-colored lithographs. Today thanks to photographic copying methods customers can choose almost an unlimited number of reproductions. On the top of that, in the world, talented artists create handmade oil paintings reproducing the world's greatest art. Our colleague, Suzette Grant, is one of those talented artists.

Mrs Grant you create superb reproductions of the world's great art. When and why did you choose to do handmade oil painting reproductions of the most famous artists?

I've been a realist painter since I was a child; I was forever sketching horses, and figures. My mother was an interior decorator and her clients asked me for family portraits or copies of the most popular paintings of the moment. Moving to Europe in the 1970s was definitely the inspirational moment for my taste in classical art but I made no attempt at it until about ten years ago. A friend of mine commissioned me to paint Caravaggio's Deposition, and that was the beginning of my copying the masters or I should say making my attempt at it.

Did you follow specific art classes to learn the technique of handmade oil painting reproductions?

I took art classes in school, nothing specific. I learned how to paint in oils from a private course when I was twelve. My teacher was



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M.J.O.

Japanese. He had a beautiful technique. As usual I was drawn to faces so I would say that it was with him that I learned the most about colors, shading, and expression.

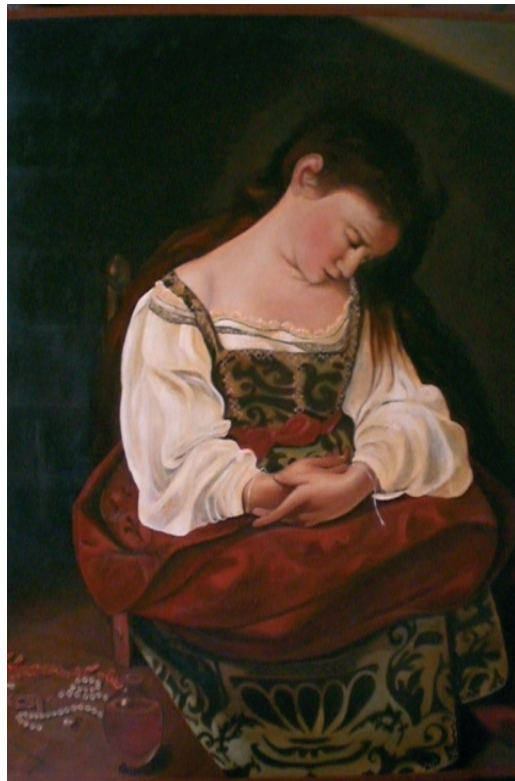


Reproduction of "Deposition" by Caravaggio
Size cm 250 x 200 - oil on canvas

Mrs Grant can you explain to the readers of the FAO Casa Gazette which are the main difficulties that you face to reproduce the painting of a famous artist? How long does it take you? How do you proceed? Do you try to work in the same way as the original master artists did? Do you study the artistic life of the master artists and try to get in touch with their "creativity"?

The most difficult obstacle in completing a painting for me, is myself. It takes months to acquire the depth and feeling of completion for this type of reproduction. Sometimes I have to quit after a couple of months and set the painting aside just to let me breathe, the work is so intense. A good

copy needs at least 30 to 40 layers of painting before reaching the detail work. I usually have 3 or 4 paintings going on at the same time. I admire many artists from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth century but my favorite will always be Caravaggio. Caravaggio launched a revolutionary style of painting for that period; not only in his use of chiaroscuro but also in his very realistic interpretations of classical and religious figures. He painted for the church without pandering to it. The impact of his paintings on me as an artist has been a life changing experience.



Reproduction of "Maddalena" by Caravaggio
Size cm 100 x 150 - oil on canvas

Beautiful surroundings can lift our Spirit, heal our body, clear the mind and open the heart. The healing power of classical music is well known. Do you give the same healing power also to the

works of art? Do you paint with this intention?

Copying the masters gives one a glimpse of their world. I have a great sense of satisfaction painting the drama, costume, and spirituality of these paintings. You're right about comparing it to playing a piece of classical music.



*Reproduction of "San Michele" by Guido Reni
Size cm 150 x 200 - oil on canvas*

Mrs Grant have you ever been asked to reproduce a famous fresco on the walls of one of your client's house or to hand paint original photographs of some special event? If not do you plan to do so in the future? Do you know if there is a copyright law for art reproductions?

Copyright law is usually 50 years then becomes public domain. I can't imagine how many copies of famous paintings there are around the world and so many that have

been sold as originals. I had the pleasure to reproduce a cm 300 x 500 fresco on canvas for the former Executive Director of WFP, Mr. James Morris who is a true art aficionado. The painting is Michelangelo's Creation from the Sistine Chapel.

The FAO Casa Lounge has already housed several times your works of art. Do you foresee to held a new exhibition at FAO Headquarters or you are going to held a personal one or collective exhibitions outside FAO?

I have been very fortunate to have exhibited at FAO in the Casa Lounge and I look forward to another appointment at the end of September. I paint on commission so it is very difficult for me to prepare enough paintings for a show. To exhibit my work I usually borrow sold paintings from clients then work on commission.

Do you have a web site where amateurs of reproductions can admire your works of art and order your paintings?

I don't have a web site, I usually send photos if a client is interested in a painting. However for people interested in my art this is my private e-mail address: sgrant1322@hotmail.com

We wish Mrs Suzette Grant good luck for her future artistic work and a special thank you for her willingness to share with us her gorgeous works of art. Reproducing works of art is just a way to look forward to perfection in fact, *"Art is not a thing, it is a way"* Elbert Hubbard ■

We invite Colleagues from all over the world and FAO Headquarters to participate to this new space "The FAO Staff Artist Corner". Should you be interested kindly send your e-mail address to the Editor of the FAO Casa Gazette at jill.stevenson@fao.org

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Veal Involtini with Speck and Scamorza

by Edith Mahabir

Ingredients:

6 large slices veal
6 thin slices speck
6 thin slices scamorza cheese (smoked)
salt, black pepper
2 tbsps Flour
Olive oil
250 gr canned tomatoes (chopped)
1 small branch celery with leaves (chopped)
1 small carrot (diced)
1 medium onion (sliced)
Parsley (chopped)
Toothpicks



Method:

In a heavy casserole or deep frying pan heat 3-5 tbsps olive oil and make a *soffritto* by frying together the onion, celery and carrot, when the onion is transparent add the chopped ripe tomatoes and a little water and season with salt. When it begins to boil lower heat and simmer covered over a medium fire.

Trim off all excess fat and nerve from the slices of veal – reserve the small cuttings of lean meat also. Season the veal slices with salt and black pepper, place on each one a slice of speck and a slice of scamorza. Roll carefully to form a cylindrical shape i.e. the *involtini* and fasten the last lemb of meat firmly with one or two toothpicks.

Heat some olive oil in a frying pan, pass the involtini in the flour shaking off any excess and shallow fry turning to colour all sides. When this has been done transfer them to the casserole with the tomato sauce. Pass the reserved lean veal cuttings in the flour and fry briefly in the same frying pan (a couple minutes), season with a little salt and add to the involtini and tomato sauce. Cook for 40-45 minutes turning occasionally, adding a little water to the casserole during cooking, if necessary, to avoid sticking or burning. The sauce should be thick.

Serve the involtini in the sauce accompanied with boiled potatoes and sprinkled with the chopped parsley. They can also be accompanied with green peas sautéed with onion and white rice for a complete meal ■



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