

JULY 2012

fao
Casa
gazette

**IAG games-Biarritz
FAO Darts Team**

**IAG games-Biarritz
FAO Football Teams**

**Vladimir Madonna: A
Russian Masterpiece of Art**

Isola di Ventotene

**Crossing the Deserts of
Sudan**

**Caserta: Versailles of the
Kingdom of Naples**

**The Diamond Jubilee
of Queen Elizabeth II**

Natural Thieves

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fao CASA gazette

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Photo by Vincenzo Marra

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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. The FAO CASA Gazette is published every month.

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FAO DARTS TEAM

by Cora-Lee Canzian (Captain)



The Inter Agency Games is always a special event for the FAO Darts Team. We practise throughout the year with the other Rome agencies darts teams, but there's nothing quite like the atmosphere and the excitement of the yearly Games, when all the teams and sports come together. Biarritz in particular is special for our team, as we won our very first trophy there at the 2008 games.

Of course we all want to play our best and bring home a trophy, but one of the best things about darts is seeing all the old and new faces every year. We enjoyed the competition, but we got our share of sun and fun as well!

We were proud to add some trophies to FAO's name this year – as a team we came in 3rd place, narrowly beaten by the two teams from IAEA, and our captain came in 1st place for the Women's Singles tournament. As the UN's largest specialized agency, it's important to represent FAO well, and we hope to be even bigger and better in the years to come!

Team Picture:

Stephen Cofield
 Stuart Tippins
 Christopher Perreault
 Cora-Lee Canzian
 Caroline vonGayl
 Susan Murray
 Marianne Guyonnet
 Paolo Martella

FOOTBALL AT THE INTER AGENCY GAMES IN BIARRITZ



photo by Antoine Estrade

FAO has a good record at the UN Inter Agency Games and this year was no exception. The women's and men's football teams pulled off an impressive 1-2 with the girls picking up the 1st place trophy and the men claiming 2nd spot in their competition.

This year's location for the games was Biarritz, a city lying in the Bay of Biscay on the Atlantic coast in the Basque territory of south-western France. The city proved to be a worthy backdrop for the sporting events and the weather was perfect for the footballers.

The women's team trained hard for the event and the performance reflected the hard work they had put in. Goals from Carolina de Simone and Laura D'Aietti were the highlights of the tournament while Stéphanie Petit put in a resolute performance between the posts. Stefania Maurelli frustrated opponents with a superb defensive display while Marion Triquet and Fernanda Ribeiro controlled play in the midfield. As well as taking on UN opponents the girls challenged the local ladies' team to a match, putting in a fine performance against a very well practiced outfit.

The men had a busy schedule this year, having to play five games to clinch a place in the final with UNESCO. This year's team was made up of 5 players from FAO, 3 from WFP and 1 guest player from ICC. New faces to the team Carlos Fuentevilla and Marco Tofani provided a solid base in defence for the rest of the team to build on, while veteran Brian Thompson provided midfield stability. Up front Howard Whalley and Justin Giannolo hammered in 10 goals between them to ensure four wins out of five. A valiant effort in the final meant that the teams were tied at 1-1 after extra time and a penalty shoot-out was needed to decide the winner. Despite tired legs after an enduring 4 days, the shoot-out needed 8 penalties for each team before a player, who we prefer not to name, finally missed handing the winner's trophy to UNESCO.

A large part of this year's success was down to the solidarity between the two teams. Between games the women gave great vocal support to the men and in return the men cheered the girls on to victory. Overall the event was a great success and an added bonus was the gift of tickets to see the local rugby side, Biarritz Olympique, play their last match of the season. This was followed by an invitation to the VIP after-party to rub shoulders with the professional players – an occasion particularly enjoyed by the girls ■

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Vladimir Madonna: A Russian Masterpiece of Art

By Fahmi Bishay

Vladimir Madonna, also known as the “Virgin of Tenderness”, is a byzantine work of art believed to have been painted in the first century by Saint Luke the Evangelist. Vladimir Madonna is an important subject for both the Western Catholic Church and the Byzantine Orthodox Church of the East. The image depicts the Virgin Mary holding a Child: Jesus Christ. Her large eyes gaze out from the picture in sadness as she may be aware of her child’s fate. Her mournful eyes cry out to us in a powerful way. The Vladimir Madonna’s hands lovingly hold the Child to her. She conveys the loving emotion of the Child she holds in her arms.¹



Figure 1. The Vladimir Madonna.

The “*Vladimir Madonna*” is one of the most venerated Orthodox icons and a typical example of *Byzantine iconography* (Figure 1). The *icon* is regarded as the holy protector of Russia. The icon is currently displayed in the Tretyakov Gallery, in Moscow. Its feast day is June 3. It is believed by the church that the icon was painted by *Saint Luke* in the first century. The venerated image was used in celebration of coronations of tsars, elections of patriarchs, and other important ceremonies of the State. The Vladimir icon is sometimes described as expressing *universal feelings of motherly love and anxiety for her child.*

1) For more details see “Vladimir Madonna” in Encyclopedia Britannica, Google and Yahoo.

Saint Luke: the Artist

It is believed that Saint Luke was the first icon painter. He is said to have painted pictures of the ***Virgin Mary: Vladimir Madonna*** and of Saints Peter and Paul. The tradition that Saint Luke painted icons of Mary and Jesus has been common, particularly in the Eastern Orthodox Church. The tradition also has support from the Saint Thomas Christians of India who claim to still have one of the Virgin Mary's icons that Saint Luke painted and which Saint Thomas brought to India.



Figure 2. Saint Luke the Evangelist painting the first icon of the Virgin Mary:

The Vladimir Madonna; (Accademia di San Luca in Rome).

Transportation of the Icon

Initially the icon was kept in Greece. And in about 1131 the Greek Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges of Constantinople sent the icon as a gift to the Grand Duke of Kiev. The image was kept in the Mezhyhirskiy Monastery until the Duke's son brought it to his favorite city, ***Vladimir***, in 1155. *“Tradition tells that the horses transporting the icon stopped near Vladimir and refused to go further. People interpreted this as a sign that the Virgin Mary wanted her icon to stay in the city of Vladimir”, (centre of European Russia at the time).* Thus it became known as the ***“Vladimir Madonna”***. To house the icon, the great ***Assumption Cathedral*** was built there, followed by other churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary throughout Ukraine.

In 1395, during the Tamerlane's invasion, the image was taken from Vladimir to the new capital: Moscow. The spot where people and the ruling prince met the icon is commemorated by the Sretensky Monastery. Tradition further indicates that *“Vasili I of Moscow spent a night crying over the icon, and Tamerlane's armies retreated the same day”*. The Muscovites refused to return the icon to Vladimir and placed it in the Cathedral of the Domitian of the Moscow Kremlin. On June 3rd every year, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates a holiday devoted to the Vladimir Icon of the Madonna. The icon is, indeed, one of Russia's greatest relics.

Copies of the Icon

The original icon has been repeatedly copied by many an artist for centuries. Many copies now have considerable artistic and religious significance of their own. For instance the Pskov-Pechora icon “Affection” (1524), the Zaonikiyev icon (1588), the Krasnogorsk icon (1603), the Oransk icon (1634), the Tupiches-Rostov and Florishchev icons (the 17th century), the Syrkov icon (1548) and others are celebrated in Russia on June 3rd every year.


Inspired by the Vladimir Madonna, the author of this article painted a Madonna and labeled it: “Bishay’s Madonna” (Figure 3). As can be seen in the figure, the face of the Virgin Mary in Bishay’s Madonna is not sad, but rather thoughtful and penetrating the future of her son. In addition, the expression on the face of the Baby: Jesus is almost smiling and clinging to his mother with very strong and loving longing in his eyes. Finally, bright colors are used, and the Coptic script in the background of the Bishay’s Madonna is emphasized.

Concluding Remarks

Appreciating that the ***Vladimir Madonna is a masterpiece in Russian art***, David Talbot Rice states in the latest edition of the ***Encyclopedia Britannica*** that: “***it (Vladimir Madonna) is (an icon) of a considerable importance in the history of painting, for it not only is a work of outstandingly high quality but also is in a new, more human style, anticipating the late Byzantine style that flourished between 1204 and 1453.***”




Figure 3. Bishay’s Madonna: inspired by Vladimir’s Madonna.
(Oil on canvas: 70 X 50 cm.)



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Isola de Ventotene

text and photographs by David Nowell



S. Stefano, Ventotene

Not far off the Italian coast, and just south of Rome, is a small island called Ventotene. Although many people know of the island, it is usually the larger neighbour called Ponza that is visited as it is larger and there is more to do. The easiest way to get to Ventotene is to take a train from Rome or car to Formia and then a ferry that takes 30 - 60 minutes (in summer there are a good number of ferries each day).

Although a small island, Ventotene has a fair amount to offer: a great little harbour, boating, scuba diving (including a number of schools), a good restaurant, plenty of accommodation and a nice protected beach. A very nice place for a few days. However, the main attraction for me is that it has to be one of the best birding destinations in Italy

during the spring migration period - April / early May is the peak.

It is early landfall for many of the migratory birds coming back from Africa to summer in Europe. As the island is small, the density of birds can get awesome. Many of the birds are exhausted and hungry, which means that they are often not as skittish of humans as they are normally. One may not get the diversity of species as in other parts of the world, but the sheer numbers and proximity is special. The other advantage of this is that photographing the birds is relatively easier and it is not uncommon to come back from a weekend with a good number of above average images of birds. The island itself also makes for good photography. Some examples from previous years



European Nightjar



Female pied flycatcher



European bee-eater



Spotted Flycatcher



Cory's shearwater



European Swallow

Crossing the Deserts of Sudan

by Peter Steele

Largely exposed for the entire day, desert riding brings its own challenges and not least those of coming to terms with the prevailing heat mid-year, drinking sufficient liquids and, at the same time, maintaining a fairly tight travel schedule that enabled us to catch the weekly ferry that crosses Lake Nasser from Sudan to Egypt, and then take the flights booked from Cairo to London. No need to read any further then – everything worked out OK.



Sudanese pyramids. Large numbers of pyramids dot the Nubian landscape as a reminder of the ancient cities that once dominated the land. This is the Karima field just off the main desert road and adjacent to the forth Nile cataract. Heat notwithstanding, this is where you capture the romance of a 'pyramid field to yourself'.

Rejoining the ride

Converging on Khartoum by air from Cairo, the Egyptair pilot had warned of sand storms over the Sudanese capital which could, for the pessimists, mean re-routing the plane back to Aswan in Egypt – so he said; but he had permission to try to land. The main airport is slap bang in the centre of the city – reminiscent of airports of old (*for just about everyone has by now constructed new airports 50 km or more outside the main city*) – and you skim in over the flat roofs of the driest capital city in the Middle East/North Africa. Arriving at 3.30 am meant waking many of those under the flight path - none of those sensitivities from back home about flights stopping at 11.00 pm the

night before then.

Khartoum: first impressions are pleasantly surprising

You could see the sand blow in the street lights of the city below – in the long boulevards that seem to make up the main cross-city routes; and certainly those around the airport. In fact, the city turned out to be something of a pleasant surprise – modern, well laid-out, wide roads, new structures everywhere and the roads flowing with relatively new cars and trucks – no congestion; brash even with billboards hugging the roadsides, fast-food restaurants on just about every corner and green with spacious gardens and lines of trees, and

(continued on page 16)

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(continued from page 14)



Moving sand. High quality Chinese-built roadways in exchange for oil and minerals, but there's not much that can be done to prevent the prevailing winds from shifting sand. In places the entire road was covered.

dusty suburbs of recently built houses.

Sure, this may be a biased view when seen from the plane, when staying at a friendly guest house in Riyadh just south of the airport (where Osama bin Laden once lived) and after just a handful of days in which to orientate, catch up with Kristian & Anna out-of-Ethiopia and then get on the road to Egypt. But it's a fair impression.

Colonial history

Growing up with British history and aware of the Anglo-Sudanese colonial war of the turn of the Nineteenth century – when the traditional authorities vested in the Mahdi of Omdurman to the west of the Nile came up against the British army – and the fighting that followed resulted in the destruction of the Anglo-Egyptian military post that represented Pax Britannica - so images of the past tended to dominate. You can still see the Republican Palace where the British Governor General Gordon was killed, and visit the museum nearby containing

memorabilia of those times.

Enter Sudan overland from Egypt and you can follow the railway that the British built – mid-year and hot season too – with which to transport their army of attrition to reclaim the city and the country. The Madhya army never stood a chance – maxim guns against spear, swords and horses – and the Anglo-Egyptians quickly took control. That same railway is still there, looking much like it did 100 years ago and it still works – of sorts. Cross into Egypt at Aswan, by contrast, and the railway in that country continues to dominate much of long distance low-cost travel.

And that attractive city layout that exemplifies the modern Khartoum? Like the design of Eighteenth century Paris, the colonial authorities of the time provided wide avenues, straight lines and ample space for use of cannon for controlling mobs in the city. As recently as 2008, these military advantages favoured the city defenders

when fighting broke out between government forces and invading Darfur rebel groups. Good traffic flow 100 years after the city was established is an added advantage for those living there today.

Coming to terms with the climate

And, perhaps more than most, it's the climate that makes that difference for those not familiar with Sudan mid-year – it is HOT (average highs mid-40degC; remember, that's a shade temperature too). You get used to handling the day in two parts – early morning and late afternoon/early evening – to escape the mid-day sun. You need to drink copious quantities of liquids – all non-alcoholic of course – and you slow down. *And that's before actually riding the bikes of course.* Wander Khartoum and you can always find a cold drink, air-conditioning, shade and an escape from the outside heat; riding the bikes you have to stagger riding to suit early morning and late evening and, where possible, get out of the sun mid-day.

On the road to Wadi Halfa

We had figured on three days of fairly demanding riding to make Wadi Halfa in time for the Wednesday ferry to Aswan; the ferry is a once-a-week affair and, fail to catch it, means one more week in sunny Wadi Halfa on the edge of Lake Nasser. This is a bit like that raffle competition in which first prize is *'one week in Wadi Halfa'* and second prize *'two weeks in Wadi Halfa'* and so on, where none of the punters actually knows Wadi Halfa.

You have two choices of route to get there – the shorter and the longer desert crossings – all roads are tar seal, so that's no issue, and the longer journey (an additional 300 km) takes you past the ancient city of Meroe (where there are >200 pyramids) and other ruins on the Khartoum to Atbara Road. Lonely Planet describes all manner of interesting places and ruins that originate from the ancient desert kingdoms of the Meroitic Pharaonic period but you need time, stamina and perseverance to



Stop a passing foreigner. No one provides better advice than those travelling in the opposite direction over roads that you need to travel. Foreign vehicles were few, and people always stopped to exchange a word or two.

undertake this kind of exploratory mission travel mid-year. For us it was simply too HOT to think about and, crucially, we needed to catch the Aswan ferry the coming week.

So, we were limited to what we could see from the main highways given the need to ride a couple of 10 hour days to put us in contact with Wadi Halfa for the Monday evening. We needed to have some time in hand for those unforeseen happenings and those that were expected, but hopefully would not feature. We imagined, for example, being stopped at the 25 km perimeter checkpoint – foreigners are not permitted to travel >25 km outside Khartoum without permission – official documented permission that is; and we were easily identifiable as ‘*not locals*’.

What we did elect to do was to cross the two long desert roads from Atbara to Karima and then from Karima to Dongola – of the order 300 km and 175 km, respectively (and then follow the Nile Valley north). You don’t consider sand road alternatives in this heat given the hardship and dangers involved, and this notwithstanding our SATNAV telling us that the track alongside the railway was the recommended route. We knew better.

Read stories from 2008 and earlier of people driving the rail tracks (actually *on* the tracks) in their 4x4s and/or getting bogged down in sand alongside for kilometre after kilometre. With modern tar seal highways recently constructed as a result of the new Merowe dam (Sudan’s equivalent to the Aswan high dam of the 1960/70s), these desert-lands have been earmarked for food and industrial crops production. You can’t shift people into new lands and encourage pioneering socio-economic development without good roads.

Khartoum-Port Sudan road – Images of the modern state

Images of the busiest road in the country *from* the road are mainly negative. Forget the heritage and traditions of the Nubian people who once lived and prospered across

the region and who pre-date the better known ancient pharaonic kingdoms of Egypt; and forget the clusters of small and steeply pointed pyramids surrounded by hill country (and sometimes looking like small hills themselves where they have fallen down or been seriously vandalized) that remain the only legacy of the cities that once thrived in these regions – these provide fleeting images.

German trucks and Chinese buses

The real images of the region are all modern - modern highways, modern diesel trucks (road trains really), new coaches full of people that chased each other at speeds in excess of 140 km/h – dangerously overtaking and zigzagging in between the lines of trucks that sometimes stretch for five kilometres or more on this narrow modern road. The coaches have paint jobs that emphasize the grotesqueness of the front image – eyes, eyebrows, flash-points and aggression. The road is fast but single lane, with a ‘mowing’ strip along each side and raised a couple of metres above the surrounding country.

The roadside is littered with thousands upon thousands of spent tyres, strips of tyre tread, pieces of rubber and other truck trash. Occasionally you pass a truck with trailer jacked up and a wheel change underway. These are 24 wheel monsters and the pragmatic management choice appears to be one of run the tyres until they fail. Roadside truck halts or private compounds have perimeter walls of old truck tyres, but no one clears up the highway.

Travelling plastic

And the other image of the modern state is those travelling plastic bags; these blow in the winds and literally cross the country to become snagged on fence-lines, bushes or trees. The inhabited parts of the country are awash with plastic trash, but it is the winds that roll these flimsy bags across the road in front of you that remain as fixed images. All the small trading centres on the road have travelling plastic bags; they were also rolling across the desert kilometres from anywhere, having travelled what distance? Check any



Water dispensers. Everywhere there is habitation, people provide cool drinking water to the passing public – not simply as a courtesy, but life-saving. In the country it's the traditional unglazed terracotta pots that use the latent heat of evaporation to cool the remaining water in the pot and, in the main towns, you find refrigerated dispensers. Cold water never tasted so good.

barbed wire fence around a kraal, compound or petrol station – the gaily coloured plastic trash reminds you of Tibetan prayer flags in another culture.

Security is everywhere

Sudan is well known for its bureaucracy, and we travelled well-prepared for the many security issues in that we had photocopied just about every piece of official paper available to us, and packaged them into clipped hand-outs. We had a dozen copies available – just as well to *'be prepared'*. Between Khartoum and Atbara we passed through eight check points – both formal (*where a structure had been built across the road – like a motorway toll station*) and informal (*where a police pick-up truck has simply pulled into line with the road and people wave you down*).

Concerned about our lack of a *'permit to travel'*, we'd figured that the further we got from Khartoum the less likely we would be sent back – with the latter check points

simply confirming the decisions taken by those earlier. Once past the first couple of check points our confidence increased, but the approach remained the same – friendliness, openness, asking directions, confirming that we were bonifide travellers en route to Wadi Halfa and, when asked, providing a photocopied package of official documents. In the end we handed out three sets.

Communicating with people

Language remained a serious barrier to the finesse of exchange given the lack of English amongst the majority security people and our inability to move on from simple Arabic phrases such as *'how are you'*, *'how much'*, *'what is your name'* and so on. Then you lose the opportunity of banter and joke. If you can't communicate, you can't use second-level messages and skill with negotiation.

But a summary of our experience from day one was the relative friendliness of the official police and/or military checkpoints,



***Fuel station travellers.** Travellers look much the same down the ages, but the camel trains have been replaced by the long-distance minibus in Sudan. A study in seriousness, but dressed in traditional fashion and a deal more comfortable than being zipped into protective motorbike gear.*

but the potential menace and/or hassles that could have arisen from wandering 'security officials' – those who would approach you in a small settlement or at a petrol station and demand your time, attention and papers. There was never any identification or official status confirmed – and we could not request it without raising the ante; we had too much to lose by allowing a confrontation to develop. You are always in a weaker position – so you acquiesce.

Sand storms

The sky had been heavily overcast with sand blow since arriving in Khartoum – blurring the sun, the edges of buildings and covering everything in a layer of fine sand. Distances are reduced. The one redeeming feature of sand filled skies is lower temperatures. The sand storms crossed the sky in front of the bikes like rain clouds in a temperate climate – with the sun shining from bright to dull as the winds carry the sand clouds. Sand covers the cities, but it is in the country where the full force is met; and typically when riding

roads that cross open stretches of sand desert.

We'd by-passed Atbara seeking to make another 100 km or so into the Bayuda Desert on the road to Katima before camping for the night. There had been severe winds for most of the day, but you learn to ride leaning at an angle and hunched over the handlebars. Then the wind began to capture and lift the sand alongside the road, and you couldn't see a *thing*. It was a case of following the white line in the middle of the road for positioning and to stop yourself from driving off the road – although these new roads are literally dead straight – given the disorientation of blind riding. Then the danger becomes one of others doing the same from the opposite direction. Fortunately, the desert crossing is part of the new Merowe dam project and there are no settlements along the road. Perhaps we passed/were passed by a dozen vehicles in a two hour ride before stopping for the night.



Crash lids

With a half open face mask on my helmet, I had the sand blasting into my right eye – the direction of the wind/sand - and tried to ride with my left hand up for a period to provide more shelter (you can't take your right hand off the throttle control). Wearing dark glasses only exacerbated vision too, but stopping would have meant losing access to the tail light of the bike in front and that also would have created further risk – that little red light provided direction.

Fortunately, the desert is as much rock and gravel as sand and, notwithstanding constant wind blow, the sand typically petered out after short bouts of difficult riding. Time to stop and clear the sand from those holes in your face – ears are always the most difficult – time to take another HOT drink. (Drinks on the bikes were always HOT; in fact the metal parts of the bike were simply too hot to hold – the tyres too).

Desert camping

Ride across a desert and you cannot miss the opportunity of camping there. We had the best of both worlds too – modern highways surrounded by desert landscape. With a new road, the legacy of materials excavation and feeder roads is always there – and it is sometimes difficult to determine what may be natural erosion and what's been left behind by the road-building teams. The wind had died down and we were surrounded by bleak black coloured hills which seemed to stretch into infinity. We headed off road – easy, over firm ground and found a convenient flat platform left by a digger; you couldn't see the road from behind a small hill, but it was close enough to hear. Camping alfresco – and no cost, and without need to register with the local plod for the night. You can sleep comfortably outside – a fresh 20+degC at night. In winter you can't do it that easily – it's simply too cold – and a sleeping bag and tent is essential ■

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THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - THERE ARE NO RULES!

Author unknown

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes, but the plural of ox became oxen not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese, yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice, yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

If the plural of man is always called men, why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
If I spoke of my foot and show you my feet, and I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth, why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

Then one may be that, and three would be those, yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
and the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
We speak of a brother and also of brethren, but though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him, but imagine the feminine, she, shis and shim.

Let's face it - English is a crazy language. There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger;
neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
English muffins weren't invented in England.
We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly,
boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?
Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend?
If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?
Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?

We ship by truck but send cargo by ship. We have noses that run and feet that smell.
And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down,
in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which an alarm goes off by going on.

So if Father is Pop, how come Mother isn't Mop

And that is just the beginning - even though this is the end.



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CASERTA: VERSAILLES OF THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES



The Honour Grand Staircase

Below is a short history of the Royal Palace of Caserta near Naples - really worth a visit:

The *Reggia di Caserta* is a splendid palace, with magnificent gracious gardens and all the opulence you'd expect from a royal residence is found here. It was built by King Charles when he took the throne of the Kingdom of Naples, wanting to establish a prestigious place that would be "fit for a Bourbon king". The magnificent mansion and gorgeous gardens were meant to rival the splendour of Versailles and act as a symbol of the new kingdom.

Charles enlisted the architect Luigi Vanvitelli to design the palace; the foundation stone was laid on January 20, 1752, on the king's 36th birthday. He personally oversaw the initial construction with exacting attention, but when the Spanish king died and Charles assumed the kingdom, he let the Caserta project lapse when he hurried off to Madrid. The death of Vanvitelli also stalled the construction until his son, Carlo, took over and completed it. It was completed in 1780, a sprawling residence and court of 1200 rooms with four interior courtyards, a chapel, a hunting lodge, a silk factory and a small, opulent theatre built to mimic the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. A grand, ramped staircase gives a stunning first impression when you enter the

building, which boasts a Renaissance-style symmetry on the facade but with Baroque decor inside.

The palace and grounds are so impressive that they were named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Self-guided tours allow you to tour the home and see some of the gold and marble splashed rooms, including the Throne Room and the Royal Apartment, which consisted of 25 rooms. A library contains 10,000 volumes. But the highlight is the sprawling garden which stretches out behind the palace for three kilometres and comprises 250 acres (100 hectares).



Main Façade of the Palace

A line of reflecting pools are skirted by sculptures, culminating at a waterfall at the far end of the grounds. The formal gardens are meticulously landscaped, while forests abound at the borders. There are so many fountains that an aqueduct was built to feed them all. There are hidden corners, sculptures scattered about, and exotic plants to enjoy. An artificial lake was used to stage mock naval battles for the entertainment of the court.



View of the Fountains and Gardens

Formally known as the Reggia di Caserta, it is open from 8:30 am to 7:30 pm daily; the grounds are open until an hour before sunset.

If one is interested in lunching in the area, although quite a way with sharply twisting roads, one can get to the ancient town of Caserta where there are quite a few excellent and reasonably priced restaurants.

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

(information taken from the web)



The **Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II** is a multinational celebration throughout 2012 marking the 60th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II to the throne upon the death of her father, King George VI, on 6 February 1952.

Queen Victoria is the only other monarch in the history of the United Kingdom, to have celebrated a Diamond Jubilee, which she did in 1897. In February 2012, a senior advisor was quoted as saying the Queen set two guidelines for the planning of her jubilee: the use of public funds should be minimised, and people should not “be forced to celebrate”.

The main event was the River Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant which was held on 3 June; a maritime parade of over 1,000 boats from around the

Commonwealth, together with other celebrations along the river banks. The flotilla started from Battersea and finished at Tower Bridge, which opened its bascules for the passing of the Royal Barge. It was one of the largest flotilla ever assembled on the river, with rowed boats, working boats and pleasure vessels of all shapes and sizes beautifully dressed and turned out in their finest rigs, there were even a few of the boats that were used to save the British Troops from the beaches in Dunkirk in 1940. The flotilla’s jewel in the crown was the Royal Barge (Spirit of Chartwell) which was decorated with over 10,000 blooms, and carried the Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry. Heavy rain started during the event, but for the millions of spectators it seemed not to make any difference at all. Unfortunately the commemorative airforce flyover at the end was cancelled due to very low cloud base and bad visibility at ground level.

The lighting of thousands of beacons across the Commonwealth took place on 4 June. The number of beacons was originally set at 2,012; by the closing date for registrations, approximately 4,000 had been submitted in the United Kingdom alone. The first beacon of the Jubilee was lit in Tonga. Other nations including Kenya, Australia, New Zealand, India, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and several Caribbean states took part in the beacon lighting. The world’s most remote beacon was lit in Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic. In the United Kingdom, British



servicemen and women wounded in battle and individuals representing charities will carry beacons to the summits of the UK's four highest peaks. The Queen lit the beacon outside Buckingham Palace at 10:30 pm, the lighting proceeded until the final beacon was lit in Canada eight hours later.

The final closure of the Jubilee festivities was the flyover by the Red Arrows over Buckingham Palace.



NATURAL THIEVES

One needs to be careful of thieves, particularly in English gardens but also in some Italian ones where nuts are put out for the wild birds.

In these two photos you can see clear evidence of the culprits. Beautiful but very naughty.



photos by Sacha Rossi



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RISOTTO WITH PUMPKIN FLOWERS

taken from "Cooking Fantasy" which
is on sale in the FAO Staff Coop Office

Ingredients

300gr parboiled or Carnaroli rice
12 pumpkin flowers
4 tbsp Rabarbaro Zucca liquer
1 large onion chopped
Olive oil
Broth (abundant)
Parmesan Cheese
60 gr Butter
Salt, black pepper



Method

Wash Pumpkin flowers, eliminate the stems and yellow pistillo inside and chop flowers. In a casserole heat 4 tablespoons olive oil and gently fry the onions until transparent, add the rice washed and mix together. Add the Rabarbaro Zucca and mix well until it has evaporated. Add about 5 ladlefuls of broth and cover until boiling, lower the heat and cook stirring occasionally for about 10 minutes. Add the pumpkin flowers to the pot, verify salt and continue cooking for another 10 minutes adding broth as necessary. When the rice is cooked 'al dente' add the butter, parmesan cheese and black pepper, mix well. Mantecare i.e. allow to rest for a few minutes before serving.

SALAT OLIVIER

Ingredients

1 boiled chicken jointed or in strips
2 raw onions, finely sliced
and separated
4 dill pickles coarsely chopped
8 boiled potatoes sliced
6 hard boiled eggs, sliced
½ level tsp black pepper
3 tbsp dried dill weed
12 green olives
2 tomatoes, sliced lengthwise
lettuce for garnish
280 ml mayonnaise
280 ml plain unsweetened yoghurt
(or sour cream)



Method

Combine chicken, pickles, potatoes and eggs in a large bowl, season with pepper. Beat the mayonnaise and yoghurt (or sour cream) together, mix delicately into chicken. Arrange on a bed of lettuce on a serving plate. Garnish with capers, dill, olives and tomato.

MANGO ICE CREAM

Ingredients

8 eggs separated
250 gr Sugar
250 ml Cream
500 gr ripe mango pulp
½ tsp lime juice

Method

Beat the egg whites until firm. add the sugar and beat energetically (also with mixer) until the mixture has swollen. In another bowl whip the cream. Beat the egg yolks and incorporate in the egg white and sugar mixture. Add the cream, mango pulp and lime juice. Pour into an ice cream container and place in freezer. Remove after two hours. Mix with hand mixer; then return to freezer.



COCKTAIL MOJITO

Ingredients

½ tsp sugar
7.5 ml lime juice
fresh mint leaves
fizzy mineral water
45 ml Havana Club white rum

Method

In a big glass or tumbler dissolve sugar in the lime juice, add the mint leaves and fill with chopped ice. Pour in the white rum and complete with fizzy water. Mix and serve.



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