

Results of Truck-Name Watching during December 1976 - January 1978

by Guido Lanfranco

Background

Sporadic instances of motor cars can be traced in the Maltese islands, to the first decade of this century, and one or two occasions can be classified as public transport. The name carozza was a general term for a coach or carriage, and the motorized specimens became known as karrozza tan-nar, or tal-pitrolju. Before the first world war, motor cars were extremely few, but that war had introduced into our islands quite a number of motorized vehicles, including ambulances, and these were used alongside horsedrawn carriages and also horse-drawn ambulances, which were very much like an omnibus with a red cross on the side curtain. Just after the war most vehicles were sold locally, and the ambulances, especially formed a nucleus of trucks which were converted into buses of sorts, with the addition of windows on sides, and a balcony at the end to allow for a legally imposed back door. These belonged mostly to individuals rather than companies, and everyone painted his car according to one's fancy, with the inclusion of figures, and especially named on the sides, referring to famous people, operas, places, and adverts, with a stress on saints. Other ambulances were converted more easily into trucks for transport of material and merchandize, and these formed part of the first transport service of the kind. However, both the buses and truck types were too few to cope with the needs of the time, and the transport of material and household furniture, etc., had to be undertaken by ordinary working carts, of which there were several sized and modifications. Still chassis were imported cheaply from England, and the both built locally, both for the buses and the trucks. The latter also included decoration and names on

available space on sides and bonnet, but unlike the bises, trucks had less space to satisfy the whims of decorators, and a smaller name was usually resorted to, for the bonnet or the sides, but still, the bonnets of cars of those days were very small, and decoration on them had to be inconspicuous. By about 1927, government adopted a colour system for grouping destinations for buses, and this destroyed the random decoration with personal inspirations of owners, but these buses still bore some small name on the side or on the bonnet, which by that time, had developed into a bigger affair. In about 1933, no more decoration was allowed on the sides of buses, and only a few retained names on the bonnet. These latter eventually disappeared for ever, and only limited strips for destination details remained. Trucks had increased too, and they retained a name on the bonnet to this day

Some names from the old buses of the 1920's

From old photographs one may glean several names of old buses, amongst which one can name the following: San Filep, St. George, St. Gaetan, St. Peter and Paul, Cottoner, Pinto, Mannarino, Matthew Callus, Eviline, Pauline, Melita, St. Rita, San Guzepp, St. Paul, Bajadera, Othello, Favorita, Sansun, Queen Mary, St. Philip's Car, Peace Car, Traviata, Splendid, Yankee, New York, Superior, Wembley, Cordina's, Mtarfa Car, etc., these being painted in large letters on the sides of the buses. In the present generation of buses, decoration is internal, and restricted to the driver's cabin, which may have simple or elaborate paintings or decorations facing the passenger sections, and include also occasionally, statues, lights, and artificail flowers; still more recently, these decorations in modern buses is diminishing, and even buses are being replaced by buses from London, imported by government in 1980-81, and sold to owners. Trucks appear to be the last to carry relics of the past craze on decoration, and the art which expressed the lives of the Maltese, is being lost in the trend where life

is becoming too hectic and impersonal. There may eventually be a time, when trucks will also cease to reflect their owners' touch.

Truck-Name Watching

The large number of trucks encumbering our roads, obstructing traffic, driving dangerously all over the place, with only rare exceptions, all have some name painted on their bonnet sides. Having observed the variety they offer, I decided to make a list of some I could come across myself on my way to work, and not having much time at my disposal, I jotted down these names whilst driving or asked someone at my side to write them down for me as I drove along. I made this decision in December 1976, and decided to stop recording them in January 1978. In this latter year, the traffic and licencing authorities, decided to replace the first numbers of the registration plates, by means of letters, in order to scatter licencing of vehicles over the year, to avoid congestion at licencing offices at the beginning of the year. The following is a list of names on trucks I recorded in the time stated above, and till then the number plates were as shown. From the list you will easily notice the names of saints, filmstars, heros of other types, singers, names from classical films and characters, nicknames names of countries or cities, and other expressions admired by the owner.

List of truck names

(where registration numbers are not recorded, or not complete, it could mean that the numberplate was either dirty with cement and mud, or obscured by the back flap left dangling over it, or simply the truck would have been driving too fast to allow both the name and the plate to be recorded together, and preference is here given to the name.)

Adeleide 3859

A B C 4437

Aldo Moro 51574

Angolina 81540

Angelo 75635

Albert 3771

Al Capone 2367

Ave Maria 75798

Always Happy 82773

Argyone III 24176

Annunziata 41601

Bir Miftuh -----	Blue Rock Thrush 53753	Back Again 47057
Bruce Lee 42699	Brave Boy 53901	Brazil 53299
Bismark 40730	Bismark 12509	B B C 47690
Boneta 31488	Black Pirate -----	Bird of Paradise 12175
Blue Lagoon 84796	Blue Cave 42601	Bullfighter 78679
Bullfight 38767	Bullfight 78679	Bad Boy 80534
Bandit Boy 84933		
Concorde 3805	Connie 20905	Censina 31986
Demisi 3645	David Mark 48013	Don't Worry -----
Devil Earth 35787	Devil Woman -----	Demise Roussos 78110
Demise Roussos 6700	David 36044	Dolores 312-8
Detroit -----	Delilah 41609	
El Dorado 45923	Elvis 42953	East of Eden 37886
8th September 43696	Elton John 39954	El Cordobes -----
Eedora 4561	Fedora 29173	Furia Cavallo -----
Freedom 56021	Firefly 55641	Firefly 54154
Frida 57042	Frida 16265	Five Brothers 2--23
Flamingo 42139	It's Not Enough 39715	Inter 12967
Il Vapur 3872	Isabella 11364	
Gun Smole 68703	Golden Arrow 25259	Golden Arrow 38575
Germany 49347	Gianni Morandi 13920	Good Luck 31451
Good Luck 3914	Gay Hunter 27670	Gianni Nazzaro 40879
Gold Dust 64229	Golden Eagle -----	
Heathrow 39649	Happy Go Lucky -----	Hawaii Five O -----
Hunter 49087		
Joe Frazer 40308	Jumbo 32197	John Mary 43911
Jaws 44250	Jomar 30002	Junior Tarzan 46078
Jason King -----		
Kangaroo 83854	Kung Fu 678	King of Kings -----
Kaboccu 47096	King of the Road -----	Kennedy 41577

Little Tarzan 5460	Little Evan 53429	Little Simon 43846
Little Mario 18186	Liljoe -----	London Town -----
Light Finger 49695	Lightning Express 40098	Hiverpool 89233
Live and Let Live 53464	Live and Let Live 27654	Liaviour Elarine 53230
Love Me or Leave Me 49492	Lucky Boy 54856	Lucky Boy 66725
Let Me Pass 78425	Lady in Blue 81465	Lady Blue 207
Matador -----	M. Lourdes --838	My Love for Ever -----
Moira 84927	Maria Bambina 67387	Maria Bambina 85371
Master Trouble 49231	Mountain 1288	My Friend -----
Manolita 37058	Maria Victoria -27291	Manuel 5706
Mexico 43691	Marco -----	Monte Carlo 13799
Monte Carlo 12883	Mexico City 49125	Morning Star 52344
Notre Dame 44414	Notre Dame 53422	New Mexico 2261
New Life 11687		Overland 1488-
Baradise 8376	Pandora 10493	Paul Anka 35976
Pussy Cat 83680	Pagliero 57184	
Quo Vadis 68561	Quo Vadis 83224	
Red Baron -----	Royal -----	Rock - n - Go -----
Road Runner 37750	Road Runner 29333	Red Star 42356
Road Devil 82080	Robin Hood 6053	Riviera 11205
Red Lion 44460	Red Lion 3384	Red Lion 58457
Red Lion 38998	Red Lion 36958	
San Gwann 75420	San Gwann 74024	Santa Tereza -----
San Rafel 81173	San Bert 861-	San Guzepp 29884
San Gejtanu 46394	San Gejtanu 16975	Santa Rita 8764
Santa Rita 21361	Santa Rita 10624	Santa Tereza 81057
Santa Lucia 39701	Saint Nicholas 48852	Saint Mary 3367-
Saint Mary 80316	Saint Mary 12503	Saint Mary 467-4
Saint Mary 27915	Saint Mary 32997	Saint Mary 67574
Saint Mary 72503	Saint Mary 34191	Santa Marija 25009
Santa Marija 39065	St. Gaetan 43135	St. Sebastian 8331
St. Anthony 46556	St. Paul 58848	St. Paul 23923
St. Dominic 31348	St. Peter -080	St. Paul 29754

St. John 47177	St. Philip 17982	St. Philip 36157
St. Catherine 2790	St. Andrew 30322	St. George 35608
St. George 31394	St. George 34736	St. John 45290
St. Peter -9196	St, Joseph 76615	St. Joseph 28730
St. Joseph 7941	St. Joseph 7012	St. Helen 81751
St. Helen 53750	St. Helen 20019	St. Christopher 39147
St. Francis 72503	St. Stephen 20346	Sea Bird 15280
Street Fighter 85050	Smiler 2941	Salvatur 2340
Spartacus 83659	Super Rocket -----	Sprrer Tiger 37909
Superstar 71473	Superstar 51206	Sunny Boy 37046
Sandy Lee -----	Salvatore -----	Sunflower 32841
Skippy -----	Silka 8793	See Me Again 79875
St. Quinton 85064	Santa Fe' 22144	Santa Fe' 14273
Tal-Grazzja -----	Taz-Zgey 63851	Tiger of Wales 35977
Tar-Tortru 47040	Tony 36765	Tiger Snake 45553
Trinita' 30989	To Rome With Love ----	True Love 62412
True Love 34270	Tal-Life -----	The Saint 33866
Tom Mix 15509	Trident -----	Truck Express 22164
Transfiguration -----	Tal-Hocc -----	The Sailor 45921
Tom Mix 5509	Tom Jones 48526	
Ursus 17142	Ustinov II 76414	UNICOP -----
United Forge 53122	USA 4373	
Vñctor Royal 42913	Victoria 44126	
Werwer 92287	Winner 1-07	Winner 31351
White Brothers 32245		
Zunzan 37510	Zorro 48015	

All the above were collected from the Sliema-St. Julians-Gzira-Valletta area, and I thank my wife Salvina, my Brother Edwin, and a lecturer colleague Isabelle Agius, who patiently jotted down my dictates whilst riding with me to work. St. George 35608 was a petroleum truck. Angolina, Kangaroo, Elton Joh, San Rafel, Connie, were smaller vehicles (vans). As a general rule, local trucks livery consists of a red cabin and bonnet, and a green carrying space; mud-guards and chassis black. Only exceptions are purple cabins or other combinations of colour.