



Inside...

## Bow Tie Wednesday

Sam Ralphs on why you should get involved

# Desperate Syrians Starving

**Andrew Burdett**

In desperate times, desperate conditions are rife. Nearly three years into the Syria conflict, and the crisis is worsening.

Dim and distant now is the memory of the optimistic wave, on which peaceful protests spread through the Middle-East. The Arab world appeared to be changing, and come March 2011 it was surely Syria's chance to break free of its ruling Ba'ath Party, in power since 1963.

The non-violent uprising was met with the gunfire of security troops, loyal to President Bashar al-Assad. This, in turn, prompted the arming of those opposed to him and his government.

Since then, more than 120,000 people have been killed and several million displaced.

Chemical weapons are believed to have been used on at least one occasion, with a UN statement in September confirming that "there is clear and convincing evidence" of their use on 21 August. A note from the organisation's

Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, says that he "believes that this is a war crime" – although Damascus denies blame.

In state prisons, it is reported, there is widespread torture and terror. Meanwhile, on the streets and in homes, it is not freedom that Syrians are fighting for: it's bread.

Prices have risen fivefold in some areas, and 80 per cent of the population say that their greatest worry is that food will run out and that they will starve.

In the last edition of *The Stag*, we reported on the incendiary bomb – thought to have been filled with a "napalm-like substance" – dropped on a school playground in northern Syria. 13-year-old Ahmed was filmed 'shaking uncontrollably' by a BBC *Panorama* crew.

Today, he has 40 per cent burns to his body. His classmate Siham is suffering 70 per cent burns.

Siham's plea now is simple but desperate: "Please let it be over now. We need to find a way out. We've had all we can take."

# World Mourns Mandela

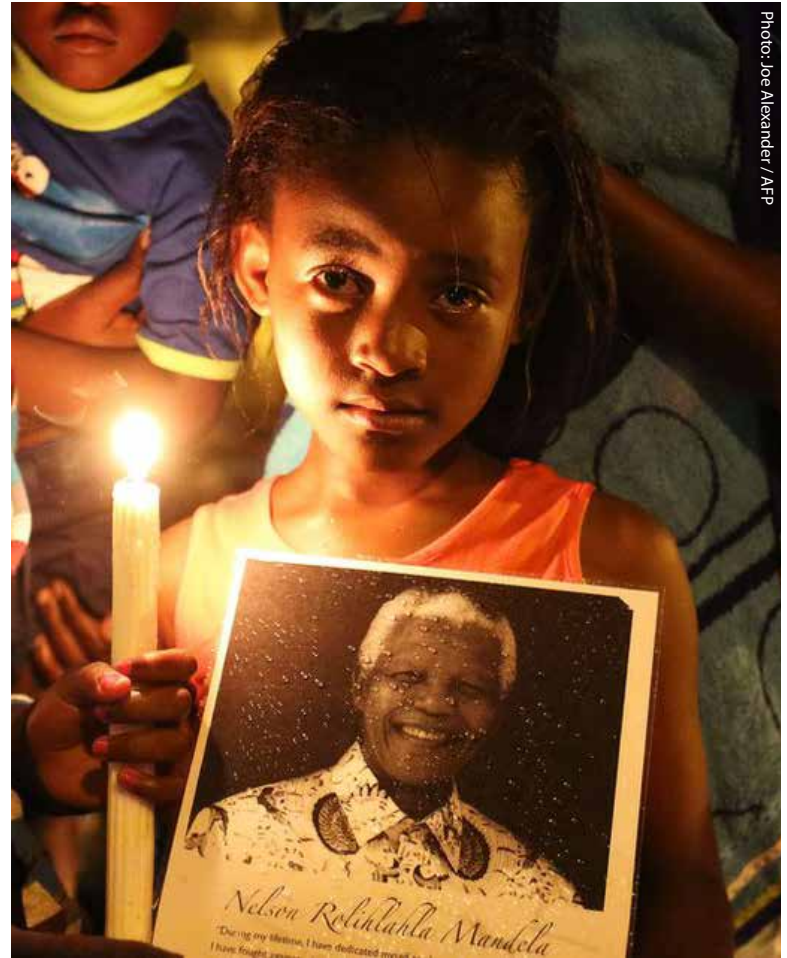


Photo: Joe Alexander / AFP

## British PM: "A great light has gone out."

Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-apartheid leader, was buried on 15 December after a state funeral service.

Political and religious leaders across the world paid tribute to the life of the man who became South Africa's first black President. In the ten days between Mr Mandela's death, on 5 December, and his final journey, the world remembered the "long walk to freedom" that Mandela made.

Jailed in 1964 as a terrorist, he was widely hailed a "hero" after his release 27 years later, and rode the wave of popularity to become the country's leader in 1994.

But today, racial tensions remain, with one Afrikaner claiming: "We are [now] suffering reverse racism".

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# THE STAG



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**Executive Editors**

Andrew Burdett  
burda001@furzeplatt.com

Chloe Banks  
Jack Cooper

**Printing**

Denwal  
Press

**UK News Editor**

Hannah Brett

**World News Editor**

Sam Kohn

**Science Editor**

Charlotte Rothwell

**Entertainment Editor**

Cherrie Ip

**Sports Editor**

Mikey Egan

**Design Editor**

Andrew Burdett

# Ten dead after Glasgow helicopter crash

**Jess Kirby**

Along with more than 30 people injured by the helicopter crash at The Clutha pub, in Glasgow, late on 29 November, ten have now been confirmed as dead. The helicopter crew are among these, all three of whom were presumed to have died on impact.

The crew was made up of pilot Davil Traill, 51, and Police Constables Kirsty Nelis, 36, and Tony Collins, 43.

The Clutha, in Stockwell Street on the banks of the River Clyde, was filled with more than a hundred people listening to live music when the helicopter crashed, leaving dozens trapped in the building.

The band Esperanza, who was playing at the time of the crash, released a statement on their



Photo: Tony Nicoletti / Daily Record

**LAST JOURNEY:** Members of the emergency services form an honour guard as two private ambulances leave the scene of the helicopter crash.

Facebook page, with the bassist writing that, “despite the situation, everyone was so helpful and caring of each other”.

No more bodies are expected to be found inside the collapsed pub, but, at time of going to press, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde said that five remained in hospital.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said that Glasgow was “united in sadness and grief”, when he was taken to look at the destroyed remains of the pub. He stated that the UK government will stand by Glasgow’s City Council and will help them to set up a fund for those affected by the tragedy.

The Queen also said that her thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families.

# ‘Forced Caesarean’ on bipolar-disorder mum

**Hannah Brett**

Alessandra Pacchieri, 35, was left heartbroken when her baby girl was taken from her after being forced to have a caesarean.

The Italian woman, who visited Britain in July 2012, experienced a panic attack after refusing to take her medication for her bipolar disorder, fearing that it could harm her unborn baby. She called the police in fear of her panic attack and was later sectioned under the Mental Health Act, being diagnosed as suffering from a mental breakdown.

The mother-to-be was then forced into having a caesarean section, initially reported by *The Sunday Telegraph* as having been demanded

by Essex County Council. However, a recent note by Mr Justice Mostyn suggests that the controversial decision was made in light of “an urgent application [...] by the NHS Trust”.

Sitting in the Court of Protection, which makes decisions on behalf of those unable to make decisions about themselves, Mr Justice Mostyn said the proposal to deliver the caesarian section was made “in the best interests of the patient herself who risked uterine rupture with a natural vaginal birth”.

Mrs Pacchieri’s lawyer states that the forced caesarean was “unprecedented”, and it is currently being questioned why her family was not informed of the situation.

The “attack” has been described as resembling a “horror film”. Social workers permitted her to see her child a few times before taking it into foster care, where the child still remains at fifteen months of age.

The distressed mother has been sharing her tragic story and fighting for her daughter, beseeching that “your family courts and your social workers invaded my body and stole my baby”.

Despite her pleas and alleged recovery, the judge at the Chelmsford Crown Court ruled that the child should be placed for adoption, fearing that the mother may suffer from a relapse.

The Italian government is now believed to be preparing to intervene.

## No evidence yet found of mechanical fault

**Andrew Burdett**

Investigators examining the wreckage of the police helicopter have found “no evidence” of a “major

engine or gearbox failure.

The Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB), based in Farnborough, Hampshire, will now try to analyse data from the helicopter’s on-board systems, although downloading the information could be difficult as they

were not crash-protected, unlike so-called ‘black-boxes’.

Meanwhile, concerns over the safety of the helicopter model have led to Bond Air Services temporarily grounding its entire national fleet of 22 EC 135s.



Photo: PA

# Middleton in Marilyn Moment



**Rebecca Hadaway**

It was a blustery winter day which posed problems for our Queen-to-be.

As the Duchess of Cambridge met children representing the charity Place2Be in late-November, the wind played havoc with her Orla Kiely pleated skirt, revealing a flash of thigh to the mass of spectators and photographers.

The Duchess remained composed and calm despite her wardrobe malfunction, smiling sweetly at the child who greeted her and swiftly brushing the windswept hairs from her face.

Bending down to nine-year-old Tierney Potter to accept a posy, the Duchess's skirt blew up in a sudden gust of wind, reminiscent of the famous Marilyn Monroe picture from the 1950s.

Tierney admitted: "I was nervous but excited. The Duchess said she wanted to say hello to the rest of the class (St Edmunds School in Tower Hamlets), so I took her inside."

Kate, 31, became a patron for Place2Be in April 2012. The charity aims to combat the issue of bullying – a problem that the Duchess has admitted to being a victim of in her childhood. The event raised awareness of cyber bullying, self-harm, and special needs, with experts speaking on the issues throughout the day.

The Duchess became a patron for the charity early last year, when she also agreed to support SportsAid, The Natural History Museum, Action on Addiction, East Anglia's Children's Hospices, and The Art Room.

Photo: Max Mumby

# Young American teacher shot dead in Benghazi

**A Texan teacher, who believed his faith would protect him in Libya, was killed during a morning jog.**

**Erin Kyle-Davison**

Gunmen shot and killed an American teacher in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi on Thursday 5 December, amid a surge of violence that has erupted between radicals and security forces.

Ronnie Smith, 33, was a Chemistry teacher at the city's international school, and the principal, Peter Hodge, told local media that Mr Smith was "much loved".

This tragedy unfortunately comes at a time when Libya is enduring some of the worst violence since the 2011 revolution. In both Benghazi and the capital city Tripoli, there have been nearly three weeks of conflict between militias, a fighting force consisting of non-professional fighters, and the army. Only last week, the Libyan army bombarded bases belonging to the Ansar al-Sharia, the Islamist militia blamed by some for the killing of American ambassador Chris Stevens at the US consulate in 2012.

Mr Smith is thought to have been critical of Islamist militias, despite the fact that diplomats in Tripoli have previously cautioned against making derogatory or insulting remarks on social media.

One of Mr Smith's tweets, published on 5 November, reads: "I understand I teach at a school of rich kids, so if (and when) I'm kidnapped by Ansar Al-Sharia, who's gonna pay the ransom?"

Hostility towards westerners has left Benghazi almost empty of foreigners, and both the American and British embassies have now advised against all travel to Benghazi for their citizens.

# My View

**Jack Cooper**

**The world's most populous nation needs more people.**

The announcement by Chinese state media that President Xi Jinping recently gave consent to alter the notorious one-child policy, by allowing certain families to have two children, has been met with widespread scorn.

The policy was launched in 1979, with the intention of helping the, at the time, undeveloped nation leave poverty, by reducing population pressures on food and other resources. Although it appears to have been successful, with population growth steadily declining, prominent Chinese statisticians feel its effect has been exaggerated. Mu Guangzong, a population expert at Peking University stated that "the people who made the policy never imagined all the problems we're facing right now", and that "society has to pay heavily for their ignorance".

Negative effects such as gender disparity are already being felt, with 118 boys born for every 100 girls. This has been achieved by selective abortion, unsurprising in a society with a strong preference for having male – rather than female – offspring, and may result in over 30 million men being unable to find a female partner by 2020. In the near future, demographic problems caused by the one-child policy are expected to have an even greater impact, by creating a nation with too few young people, and too many elderly, devastating for a nation that relies on a young workforce to support its industry.

It is this threat to China's economic growth that has prompted the political elite to seek reform, as opposed to the extensive ethical problems associated with the policy. Renowned for conducting forced abortions on pregnant women who are over their quota of children, it never seemed likely the glacial pace of Chinese politics would be sped up by such concerns.

At this stage, President Xi needs to do more than change the fine-print. He needs to overturn the whole system.

# Coffee Break Sudoku

Whilst you're revising, working on your EPQ, or completing coursework, relieve yourself for ten minutes with a cup of coffee – and our sudoku.

Usual rules: each row, column, and sub-box must contain all numbers 1 to 9.

	4			3			5	
3	1						7	8
			5		9			
		9		2		6		
1	2						8	9
		4		8		3		
			6		1			
8	6						2	4
	3			7			9	

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**China sends rocket to moon but UK aid continues**

Official figures reveal that Britain sent £27.4 million of aid to China in 2012 – despite ministerial assurances that the programme was to stop.

Ironically, twelve months later, the UK Prime Minister David Cameron was in

China, on a trade visit. "If you are investing in Britain, invest more," he told business leaders during an address in Shanghai.

Embarrassingly, his plea may have fallen on deaf ears. The *Global Times*, a Chinese nationalist newspaper, dismissed the UK as no longer a big power: "It's just an old European country, apt for travel and study."

# “Farewell, my dear brother”

South Africa's first black President passed away in his Johannesburg home on Thursday 5 December at the age of 95, prompting tributes across the world.

Georgia Austin

Anti-apartheid activist and icon Nelson Mandela passed away surrounded by his loved ones.

The cause of his death was certified as a prolonged lung infection and the respiratory problems he suffered in recent years. Many have speculated that these health problems originated during his time in prison, where he contracted tuberculosis after working in the prison quarry. He was receiving intensive medical care at home after his three-month period in hospital before his death.

Mandela served as the South African President from 1994 to 1999, in which his government focused on dismantling the legacy of apartheid through tackling institutionalised racism, poverty, and inequality.

Prior to this, Mr Mandela had spent 27 years in prison, from 1964 to 1990, charged with sabotage and conspiracy to violently overthrow the government. His incarceration was strongly protested, with many groups campaigning for his release.

South African President Jacob Zuma announced that he “passed on peacefully”, going on to say: “Our nation has lost its greatest son. Our people have lost a father”.

Crowds began gathering outside the house where Mr Mandela lived; waving South African flags, wearing the shirts of the governing African National Congress, which he once led.

Mr Mandela was given a state funeral, at which 4,500 people witnessed the end of “an extraordinary journey that began 95 years ago”, as President Zuma said.

“We shall not say goodbye, for you are not gone,” he continued. “You’ll live forever in our hearts and minds.”

Television viewers across the globe watched the proceedings, broadcast live from Mr Mandela’s childhood village of Qunu. A vast temporary marquee had been erected at the family compound in which mourners wept, sang, and danced. However, the lowering of the casket was hidden from the world’s lenses: at the request of the family, the media agreed not to show that final, most private part of the ten-day mourning period.

## The selfie that all the world saw

Andrew Burdett

Prime Minister Cameron and President Obama lent in, as Danish premiere Helle Thorning-Schmidt snapped a picture of herself with the pair on her iPhone.

A mammoth news event of 2013 – the memorial service for Nelson Mandela – clashed with a much smaller one: just last month, ‘selfie’ was named Word of the Year. Gone are the days of “been there, done that; got the T-shirt to prove



it”. Now, it’s more, “been there, done that, and here’s 1,600 pictures of me that I’ve uploaded to Facebook for you to dispassionately click through”.

But, at one of life’s (now rare) sombre occasions, is it really acceptable for such pictures to be taken?

Selfies, by nature, place oneself at a higher status than the circumstances around one. In most instances, the thinking goes: ‘no one else was going to take a picture of me

here, so I’ll take one myself’.

Surely, this self-centred act conflicts with the spirit of humbleness that Mandela is renowned for? Probably.

On Tumblr, there’s an astonishing self-explanatory blog called *Selfies at Funerals*. For me, many of its featured posts defy belief: as one girl buried her great-uncle, she was apparently more interested in sharing with the world her own curvy, black-clad figure, than paying any ‘last respects’.

Cocooned within their self-centric orbs, people forget that the world does not necessarily always revolve around them.

And yet, there is another way to look at ‘Selfie-gate’ today.

In that photograph, there is a mix of men and women. And there is a mix of black and white. All three people are world leaders and, more than that, they represent the first of a new generation of such: Obama, the first black US President; Thorning-Schmidt, Denmark’s first female Prime Minister. The fact that, in South Africa of all places, they can carelessly lean in so closely together is something that would have been unimaginable even a quarter-of-a-century ago. For the man whose life was being celebrated, that freedom, that blurring of repressive dividing lines, is the greatest legacy – captured, unwittingly, in an arms-length photograph.

Mandela, I’m sure, will want a copy for his albums.

NEWS IN BRIEF

### Memorial signer a “fake”

President Obama’s speech at Nelson Mandela’s memorial service was hailed as one of his best ever, but deaf viewers couldn’t understand any of it – the sign-language interpreter turned out to be unqualified.

Viewers complained that Thamsanqa Jantjie’s signings were “complete gibberish”, and that they bore no relation to the words being spoken. But Mr Jantjie has since said that he was suffering a schizophrenic episode on-stage, leaving him unable to do his job.



Photo: Odd Andersen / AFP

# The reason Joey Essex can't tell the time



Photo: ITV

**Sophie Mahmud**

The *Only Way Is Essex* reality TV star, 21-year-old Joey Essex, landed himself a place in *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here* in November.

After being in the camp for a matter of days, Joey openly admitted to his fellow camp members that he had never learnt to tell the time or blow his nose. Sister, and former member of *The Only Way Is Essex*, Frankie spoke out in an interview about the reasons why Joey never learnt these basic life skills. Frankie told reporters that when Joey was 10, their mother commit suicide, after suffering from a serious illness – the pain of which she could not cope with.

Joey only found out about his mother's suicide in 2010 as his father and sister wanted to protect him and had previously only told him his mother had "gone away". When Joey asked questions about his mother, they replied: "She'll be home soon."

Frankie told reporters: "Joey wasn't shy to admit he can't tell the time, he's very genuine and he was never the brightest spark at school. I got upset when people were horrible about it because around the period when Joey would have learned to tell time, our mum died."

She then added: "We didn't have a chance. There were more important things going on in his life. I brought Joey up with Dad, and we're so proud of him in the jungle."

Frankie spoke on behalf of herself and her father, saying: "He's gone in there a boy and will come out a man."

# Actor Paul Walker killed in car crash

Paul Walker, the American actor and *Fast & Furious* star, has died aged 40 in a tragic car accident.



**Cherrie Ip**

Paul Walker was in the passenger seat of a Porsche with a friend, who also lost his life in the accident. They were found dead at the scene on Saturday, 30 November.

The father-of-one starred in many television programmes and films, including *Varsity of Blues*, *She's All That*, and his best-known series *The Fast and The Furious*.

Los Angeles county Sheriff deputies reported that a red Porsche was engulfed by flames after hitting into a lamppost in the community of Valencia. Walker was attending Reach Out Worldwide, a charity event, which he had founded in 2010 to provide aid to people affected by natural disasters.

Universal Pictures issued a statement about the sudden news: "Paul was truly one of the most beloved and respected members of our studio family for fourteen years, and this loss is devastating to us, to everyone involved with the *Fast & Furious* films, and to countless fans. We send our deepest and most sincere condolences to Paul's family."

A private memorial was held in December for the *Fast & Furious* cast and crew. Fellow co-star, Vin Diesel, emerged when it had finished, thanking fans for paying their respects.

He later posted on Instagram: "Brother I will miss you very much. I am absolutely speechless. Heaven has gained a new Angel. Rest in Peace."

The future of the film series is now in question as director James Wan and his team will have to write his death into the script, meaning the loss of one of the franchise's most important characters.

# Review: Gravity, 2013

Frazer Gault, The Stag's film reviewer, thought this year's hottest release was out-of-this-world.



Warner Bros. Pictures

**Frazer Gault**

*Gravity*, the 3D sci-fi thriller, directed, co-written and co-produced by Alfonso Cuarón stars award winning actress Sandra Bullock and Golden Globe Award winning actor George Clooney.

Two astronauts, experienced Matt Kowalski (Clooney) and first spacewalk scientist Ryan Stone (Bullock), are working on repairs to the Hubble Telescope when a Russian missile causes a deadly cloud of space debris to orbit around the earth every 90 minutes.

They are left floating with no contact

with mission control and running dangerously low on oxygen. The characters must try and puzzle out how to get to the International Space Station safely, negotiating difficulties in a chain of events.

Through the whirling panic and dramatic crashes, the film takes us nearer to the sensation of space than any film has before, and as near as most of us will ever get.

Instead of cinematic clichés, the plotline shows us truths about survival, communication, and looming disasters. I found the film extremely enjoyable and highly recommend it.



Warner Bros. Pictures

# Bow Tie Wednesday:

*get yours on and join in*

## Sam Ralphs

A recent phenomenon has slowly grown in popularity within the Furze Platt Sixth Form: Bow Tie Wednesday. The event, which occurs weekly on a Wednesday – as the name would suggest, encourages an injection of frivolity into the otherwise monotonous doldrums of standard sixth form attire. Introduced to the Furze Platt in the 2011/12 year by former student Harry Wilcox, the trend has been reintroduced with great success.

Following a slow start with minimal uptake, Bow Tie Wednesday has expanded steadily, with participants now regularly reaching double figures. Contrary to social expectations, the gender ratio for Bow Tie Wednesday is relatively equal with female participants often surpassing males.

Regular bow tie wearer and Sixth form student, Elspeth Kinns, stated that Bow Tie Wednesday “seemed like a fun idea”, adding: “I didn’t want to leave it up to the guys!”

Publicity has also helped the Bow Tie Wednesday movement. An online Twitter campaign, under the hashtag “#bowtiewednesday”, alongside an email to all Sixth Formers have boosted

the exposure, encouraging others to ditch the ordinary and bow tie-up.

Some ask, why the bow tie? It is, surely, an archaic item of attire, often associated with high class and elitism, that hardly has a place outside the ballroom?

“With a bow tie, you can look as suave and sophisticated as James Bond.”

Bow Tie Wednesday challenges this. With a bow tie on, you can look as suave and sophisticated as James Bond or proudly and unashamedly eccentric; such is the appeal of the bow tie.

Year 12 bow tie wearer Ethan Piercey summarised the impact of the event, showing his own support for the underappreciated accessory:

“Bow Tie Wednesday adds some style to the working week, and everyone enjoys the quirkiness the bow ties bring to the Sixth Form”

So I ask you, readers of *The Stag*: what is stopping you? Bow ties are inexpensive, stylish and add a panache and exuberance to an otherwise uneventful and dull Wednesday. We urge you to join in. Either

learn the art of tying your own bow, or take the easy option with a pre-tied; Bow Tie Wednesday welcomes all.



Photo: Andrew Burdett

# The Future of English Football

Reforms are being called for after a painful qualification campaign for the 2014 World Cup and lack of grassroots support for the England squad.

## Chris Harding

Recently, the England squad qualified for the Brazil 2014 World Cup with 22 points, Ukraine close behind with 21 points. Fans and critics alike have claimed this is ‘not enough’. England are now rated a low twelfth in the FIFA / Coca-Cola world rankings but, worse yet, the national squad almost had their place in Brazil usurped by an even lower Ukraine, 18th. Furthermore two losses, in the post-qualifying friendlies, to Chile and Germany have resulted in criticism of the current English FA system.

In the English Premier League, 32 per cent of players are English. In contrast, 59 per cent of players in the Spanish La Liga are Spaniards, and similarly, half of the German Bundesliga are nationals. Currently, both teams are sitting comfortably at the top of the FIFA rankings. But the diversity in the Premier League is what makes it so unique and, arguably, the greatest league in the world.

So, what is the answer to this problem? Opportunities. There needs to be more chances for young English players to show their talents, and an emphasis on supporting these players from the FA to the top flight teams.

There is a lot to learn from other National youth set-ups. For example, the Belgians had a torrid Euro Championship in 2000. After this, huge emphasis was placed on the youth, and funding for the young players was increased. Likewise, after the Netherlands team had a terrible Euro experience in 2012, their youth squad gained

support and funding after it. More than anything, this shows a willingness to focus on the future and correct mistakes, something which the English FA simply doesn’t have, with only 12 million being spent on grassroots facilities from a possible £318 million revenue.

The fans play a crucial part in the beautiful game of football, but are we doing enough to support the Three Lions? Although being a typically sceptical race, we too often criticise the team very early. It’s worth remembering that Alex Ferguson came under criticism in his early years, but the fans and club supported him. He’s now a Sir.

But once again we must question the FA as to what they’re doing to encourage fans. Ten years ago, Belgium were pulling in crowds as small as 10,000. After hiring a PR team, a series of stunts were deployed. One of them involved setting the country a challenge: ‘paint Belgium red’. The country did so and thus the team was recorded playing football in sumo suits, obtusely comical. The support grew massively and here Belgium are: qualified for the upcoming World Cup, confident in the future, and with many fans.

It is clear that it is time for the English FA to reform, through their support for fans and youth alike. But it has to be the English way. We can learn lots from other countries, but in the end we must play English football, not trying to emulate the passing styles of Spain, technical tricks of the Germans, or even the Karate kicks from the Dutch. We need to play our own brand.

# Tom Daley reveals he’s dating a man

## Olympic diver ends years of speculation about his sexuality.

### Harriet Hope

Tom Daley revealed the news that he is dating a man, in a charming video on his YouTube channel. The 19-year-old said that he has been dating a man and that he has “never been happier”, but insisted he “still fancies girls”. The Olympic medallist added that, while his mother has been supportive, some of his other family members have “mixed opinions.”

Mr Daley, born in an unpretentious suburb in Plymouth, took up diving at the age of seven, and quickly displayed a fabulous talent. Aged 10, he won a national youth title. By 12, he was beating adult professionals.

Aged 14, he was selected for the Beijing games, becoming



the second youngest male athlete ever to represent Great Britain at The Olympics.

Tom has spent his teenage years wrestling with his sexuality, but said it should be irrelevant to his career: “In an ideal world, I wouldn’t be doing this video because it shouldn’t matter.”

“Come spring this year, my life changed massively when I met someone and it made me feel so happy, so safe, and everything just feels great. And, well, that someone is a guy.”

He’s an inspiration to many, and stole the hearts of many nations whilst performing in the Beijing and London Olympics. He’s said to continue to be motivated, and is working towards the Rio de Janeiro games in 2016.

# STAG SPORT



**Harriet Hope**  
**Tom Daley**  
 in YouTube coming-out



**Chris Harding**  
**English Football**  
 Looking to the Future



## Andy Murray wins top national Sports award

**Andy Murray, the bookies' favourite, wins BBC Sports Personality of the Year award by a record-breaking landslide.**

### Michael Egan

Andy Murray won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award by a landslide, scoring more votes than the other nine competitors combined.

No previous winner has secured more than 50 per cent of the popular vote, but Mr Murray attained 401,470 votes, almost 56 per cent of the 717,454 votes cast.

Welsh rugby union player Leigh Halfpenny came second, with 65,913 votes, while jockey AP McCoy ranked third. But is Mr Murray's record-breaking win really a surprise?

The British tennis player, who ended the drought of 77 years by tearfully lifting the Wimbledon trophy in July, was long predicted to be the winner of 2013's SPOTY award. After an epic win against world number one Novak Djokovic, critics had predicted that this would be the year for Murray to claim the award. (In 2012, he finished third, behind Sir Bradley Wiggins and Jessica Ennis.)

The shortlist was selected by a panel of experts, including the jockey Tony McCoy (the 2010 winner, who

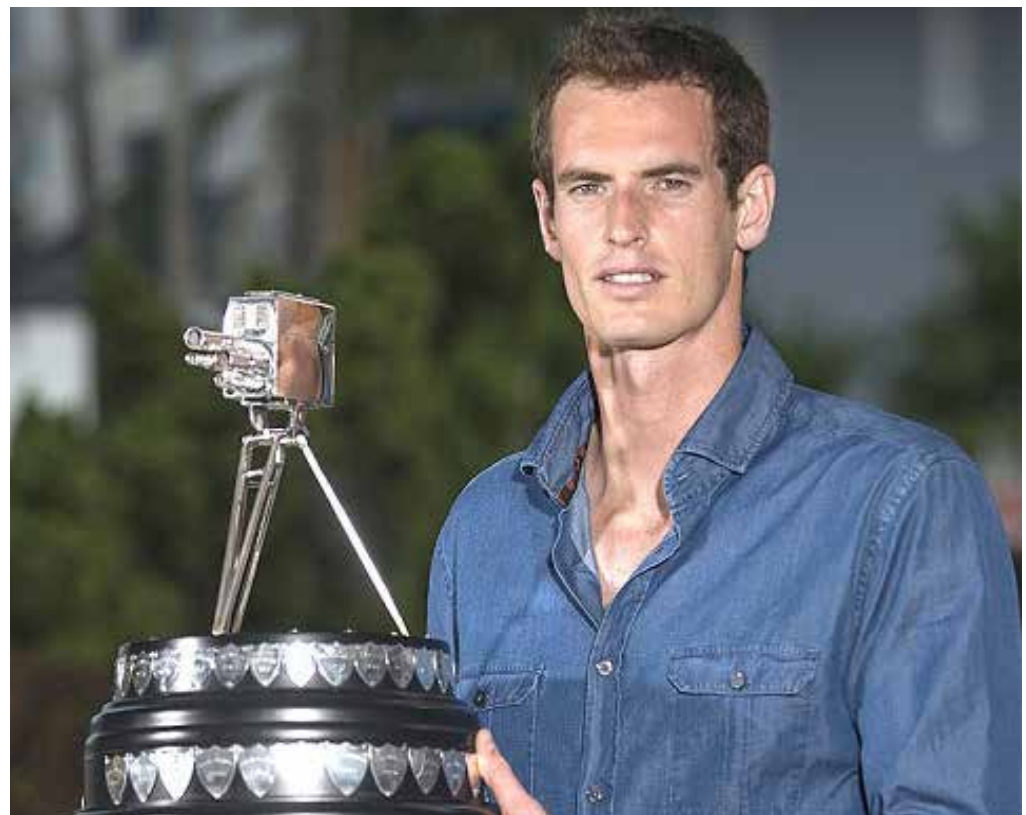


Photo: BBC

rode his 4,000th career victory this month) and Mo Farah (who secured double athletics gold at the world championships in Moscow). The Tour de France winner Chris Froome and the US Open champion Justin Rose also made the cut, alongside Sir Ben Ainslie who was credited with spearheading the greatest ever comeback in the America's Cup.

Debates over what the criteria for the prize are – and whether

it even matters – are usually as contentious as the discussions over who should win, but Mr Wiggins last year said the validation of the British public at the end of a tough year was something he would remember for the rest of his life. True to form, he celebrated with gusto and ended the night storming the stage at the after-party, to play guitar on songs by The Jam and Oasis.

This year there was

none of the awkwardness of 2012, when Mr Murray (appearing via live video-link) effectively had to award himself the third-prize due to award-giver Lennox Lewis missing his cue. Accepting the prestigious award in the same Miami hotel, this year Mr Murray said: "I'd like to thank all the public who voted, for giving me so much support over the last couple of years."

"It's made a huge difference."