



Travelogue No 77



S & P Downgrade France's AAA Rating

Frog President Nickelsear Sarcastic learnt the truth about criticising others before hearing of his own fate. Ratings Agency Standards & Poor downgraded France's AAA rating shortly after the Parisian gnome had levelled a series of insults at British PM, David Cameron about Britain's economy, saying that it was the UK that should suffer the humiliation of a downgrade.



The French downgrade was met with muted glee in Downing Street and the Treasury, where officials have grown tired of Sarkozy's grandstanding over the economy, and his attempts to undermine Britain at the EU summit before Christmas.

However, it was not to be. Britain retained the coveted AAA rating and sourpuss Sarcastic now faces the wrath of his public in his May election battle. Here's hoping that Marine Le Pen, daughter of far right nationalist ex leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, gives so called conservative Sarkozy a run for his money. Front runner Socialist Francoise Hollande leads the polls some five points clear of the current incumbent and seven points ahead of Le Pen. S & P is the world's oldest credit rating agency and with rivals Moody's and Fitch has enormous influence in the financial markets.

The agencies assess the credit-worthiness of borrowers, including countries and companies, and give them a score to tell lenders how likely it is that they will get their money back.

The score card affects the cost of borrowing - making the view of the agencies critical. The lower the rating, the higher the risk the investor will not get his money back. Critics argue that ratings agencies have far too much power and they were heavily criticised for giving high ratings to toxic sub-prime mortgage investments.

Mr Sarkozy recently had a child with his third wife, former polythelia supermodel Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, but both have been involved in a series of high-profile scandals. It has been alleged that Mr Sarkozy once accepted envelopes full of cash from Lilliane Bettencourt, the L'Oreal heiress, in return for future tax breaks.



Ms Bruni-Sarkozy, meanwhile, was this month accused of transferring large amounts of Aids charity cash to close friends in Paris.

Firework Disaster Takes Lives

A massive fireworks explosion in Suphan Buri claimed 4 lives, injured 75 and destroyed 734 properties. The show, held at the city pillar shrine in Muang district, was to mark the start of the Chinese New Year celebrations. Authorities found a launcher tube was angled improperly, causing a firework to be directed too close to the ground, igniting other fireworks. The damaged buildings were in a 3km radius of the blast site, Suphan Buri governor Somsak Phurisrisak said. The organisers of the event could be liable for civil and criminal charges. Fortunately most people living around the town hall, where the fireworks go off, move out every year because they know what to expect.



Evening All - What's The Time?

Britain's biggest police force has spent more than £35,000 on finding out the time from an automated clock service over the past two years, figures showed last week.



London's Metropolitan Police also spent more than £200,000 calling directory services for contact numbers, at a time when forces across Britain are sacking tens of thousands of staff under an austerity drive.

A spokesman said the Met was committed to reducing costs but said there were "evidential and operational reasons" to use the telephone services. Figures released under the Freedom of Information Act showed the force spent £16,879 to find the exact time from the Speaking Clock last year and £18,402 the year before. At 31 pence a call, this is the equivalent of 110,000 calls. It also spent £95,313 on directory enquiries, used to find business and residential contacts, in 2010-11, down from £121,501 the previous year.

"We are committed to reducing such costs wherever possible," a Met spokesman said. "It must be remembered, however, that a huge number of our officers and staff will not have direct access to the Internet as they are not office-based. There are clearly evidential and operational reasons for officers and staff requiring the exact time and contact details."



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Police have been accused of getting their sums wrong when they swooped on a shopkeeper's business and seized a cache of gun-shaped calculators – because they feared they could be used in a robbery. They were seized after someone saw the toys on sale on The Present Finder's website and made a complaint to firearms police. Detectives are currently in the process of assessing the 'weapons' to decide whether they must be destroyed or returned to the shop. The £6.50 'gun' calculator is in the form of a black pistol but clearly has a calculator keypad on the butt and an LCD display on the barrel. The user has to pull the trigger to calculate their sum.

Cops in Car Park Calamities

They undergo weeks of intensive training before finally being handed the keys to a patrol car. But despite their expert instruction some hapless officers have trouble even getting out of the force car park. Patrol cars owned by Durham Police were involved in 120 accidents in the last two years, costing almost £20,000 in repairs. And the most costly collisions occurred at its headquarters in Aykley Heads, Durham, as officers attempted to negotiate their way out of the car park. It is perhaps fortunate then that the HQ is home to the force's road accident investigation unit.

No Policing So Pensioner Quits

A pensioner who twice went to prison rather than pay council tax because her street was so plagued with crime has given up her decade long fight to clean up her neighbourhood. Josephine Rooney, 75, plans to leave Britain for good to start a new life in Ireland. She said she was fed up with finding syringes in her garden and being harassed by drunks on her way to the shops. 'I've reached a point of acceptance that it's never going to get better and I need to leave it behind,' she said. 'I find living there very menacing now. There are some good people in Hartington Street – but it is only a small percentage.' For ten years Miss Rooney has battled to drive drug addicts and criminals out of the street in Derby, where she has lived for 26 years. Despite her campaign, she said, things had gone from bad to worse. She says she wakes every day to find her garden littered with syringes. And after a series of break-ins, she has been left 'terrified' to even set foot in her own street, which is full of 'drug addicts and squatters'.



Thailand Tails



So finally the Chill Bar on Nernplubwan came up with the lack of goods once more. Despite having ordered lunch for the Wednesday, following Sunday's roast lamb, it seems that the resident scrote had had a birthday party the night before and was comatose inside. Sorry, no food today was the call so a new venue had to be found. Whether proprietor Simon knows of the failings is anybody's guess, but it is most likely that he ended up with the birthday party tab. When the cat's away ...!

Newly discovered eatery Sand Stone, just down the road from Brian Jacks' View Dee apartments, has turned out to be an oasis in a sea of mediocrity. Family run with a decently priced menu and very friendly staff, this is an ideal afternoon venue for grub and relaxation. Catering for Thais and farang, the chicken in a mustard sauce was superb, whilst the F&C was extremely passable. Recommended, with more reports and pics to come. Soi 24, off Nernplubwan, right by the Family Mart.



The Thai Polo Open is one of the most prestigious events on the Thai polo calendar, with teams from Southeast Asia vying for the Princess Cup at the Thai Polo & Equestrian Club in Pattaya, just over one hour's drive from Bangkok. The tournament is a charitable event to raise funds for HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirinidhorn's Chitralada Vocational School project. Title sponsors for 2012 are BMW Thailand with B.Grimm Group; other major sponsors include La Martina and EFG Bank. OK Yah, chukkas away !!!

Whilst searching the undergrowth and hedgerows of the Nongprue district for an errant African Grey, several rescuers spotted this highly coloured parrot in a local hostelry. Despite being a different species, it was of similar stature and ill manners. When asked if its name happened to be 'Champagne', it turned a beady eye to the enquirer and simply said 'fuck off' !!! It didn't make much of a meal either !!



Spotted strolling down Soi Chaiyapoon was Eddie McGee, ex VP of Coventry City. CCFC won the FA Cup in a tight encounter with Arsenal 3-2 in 1987 with Gary Mabbutt scoring an own goal at Wembley. Now a regular expat in Thailand, Eddie lives close to Wrexham publican Les 'Toffee' Powell in Buriram. Regular visits to Pattaya mean that the Chill Bar and Canterbury Tales get the pleasure of more entertaining stories from this well travelled entrepreneur. Keep on keeping on.

News is filtering through of a major housing project in Rayong this year. Numerous houses are to be built with an overall budget of 250 million baht and extensive landscaping for the entire site. In for the gardening lay-out and overall planning and maintenance is well known local entrepreneur and gifted spendthrift Bilious Biggs. The project includes an onsite janitor's house and unlimited funds to construct a modern day version of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. From conservatories and rose gardens to wilderness follies - time will tell if the sticky fingered veteran has lost any of his ancient gardening skills !!



Canterbury Tales experienced a visit from old lag John Paulson, accompanied by Banglamung's finest in attempting to resolve a matter of outstanding debt and alleged theft. Having served three months in the pokey for lack of passport, 3 year deportation and eventual return to the Kingdom, lost cause Paulson from Sunderland attempted to implicate Dave Collier in theft of his mobile phones. The locals were having none of it. It seems Paulson is well known for scams and it was no surprise that this shyster got short shrift. Despite serving time for immigration offences, the outstanding debt still requires settling or east country boy Johnson will get a permanent exclusion order against him. Card marked, buddy, so make trouble elsewhere. The regular Friday gathering enjoyed the incident and will report on any developments in the vicinity !!

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Local News Around Ponthep Garden 3/1

The arrival of 2012 brought with it unusual weather patterns during what is, supposedly, the high season. Rain clouds, thunderstorms and lower temperatures have been regular in the Chonburi Province during January. Phalanxes of buses carrying Russians are in evidence with companies like Pegas and Tez leading the way discharging large, ignorant humanoids in the centre of Pattaya.



Back on the Darkside, some expats are returning from family commitments in Blighty over the Xmas period. Checking on Government pensions, tax situations and general dilution of assets, there is always a reason to return if only to make sure that one's inheritance is secure. Helmet and his partner Cow, pictured left, have recently returned from Germany. Actually decent folk and considerably better than most of the Krauts in the village. Neil from Southampton has also returned for more pleasurable inter-

ludes with his partner Plough. They have taken up the challenge of ten pin bowling at Tops with Khun Eat. So far the results have been in Eat's favour but Neil is very competitive and a win is on the cards. Unfortunately Plough is struggling to get the bowl on the flat bit and has a way to go before Neil coughs up for a strike ball. Soon to return are Terry and Rat from a three month UK visit. Terry will, no doubt, regale us with tales of desperadoes, dilettantes and delinquents during his visit to family, friends and medical experts. Having had cellulitis before returning, we hope he is back on the road to recovery and has more stories to tell.



Mick and Noy had a party for the twins third birthday at their new home on Mabprachan Lake. Swarming with squealing wee infants, I decided not to attend so Eat duly obliged. A fun, if noisy, event attended by many of their old neighbours in Ponthep 3/1. Some of the cake got eaten, the rest was worn by the participants !!



New venue Sandstone has become the 'in place' for midweek lunch. Taking over from dilatory and unhelpful staff at the Chill Bar this little oasis is home to a number of French and Thais. Excellent menu at the right price, booze at very acceptable levels, this will be the venue of choice in future. Sadly closed on Sunday, this would be a great spot for roast lamb. Family run with Dad having

cheffed at the Amari, this is a real oasis in a sea of inadequacy. Finally, Eat enjoyed the pleasures of another birthday. Without revealing how young she is, we lunched at Fuji in Big C, Sukhumvit, Pattaya. An excellent, healthy lunch with Green Tea, we had a lovely relaxing day and many well wishers on Facebook made for a super day. Stay well all !!



The Amanda Platell Column

The Daily Mail

Michelle Obama has hit back at claims in a new book that she is a difficult, controlling First Lady who has her President



hubby by the nether regions. 'I've been unfairly depicted by many people as some kind of angry black woman from the beginning,' she said, suggesting the criticism is racist. The truth is, it wouldn't matter what colour she was, Michelle Obama would still come across as a feisty, lime-light loving First Lady. She must have modelled herself on Cherie Blair !!

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Bryan Ferry, 66, has married his 29 year-old girlfriend, Amanda Sheppard, in a private ceremony on a beach in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean. He has not ruled out starting another family. The debonair Roxy Music front man was first married to Lucy Helmore with whom he had four sons over twenty years of marriage.



Princess Anne checked into a hotel for a private visit and refused the £225 premier suite with sea view in favour of one overlooking the rear entrance of the hotel as it was £40 cheaper. No nonsense, no pomp, no ceremony - just hard working, down-to-earth and frugal. Sometimes its hard to believe she's related to Charles and Andrew !!



Only one in six people think Labour leader Ed Milliband should be Prime Minister. According to John Humphreys of Today programme, he may be too ugly for the job. During interview EM pointed out proudly that he is a socialist. The reason people don't warm to Ed is that, in his calculated pursuit of Middle England, he's pretending to be something he is not. He has no empathy with the hard working, middle-class families who are the backbone of this Country. He is an unreformed high-taxing, interfering, big Nanny-state Leftie. The one thing voters can sniff is a fraud.



Quentin Letts on Saturday

Given that the Home Office is in charge of policing and prisons, you might expect its employees to be law-abiding. Dream on !!

Tory peer Lord Marlesford has elicited details about criminal activity

by HO staff. Using parliamentary written questions, he has discovered that in the past five years 29 HO



workers have been convicted of criminal offences in connection with their official activities. Lord M expresses astonishment not only at the high number of convictions but also at the gravity of the misdeeds. The worst ten :-

Anthony Quarco (ten years)

Mofey-ishola John-ayo (nine years)

Radhakrishnan Kittoor Ramakrishnan (8 yrs)

Samuel Shoyeju (seven years)

Bridget Eworth Idigbe (six years)

Benjamin Orororo (five years)

Aliya Ali (five years)

Atma Sawh (five years)

Somayeh Rahimi Nejad Tafreshi (four years)

Eme Esua (three plus three years).

Said Lord Marlesford 'These are very serious sentences and there has obviously been major malfeasance. I am amazed by these details and am now asking questions about the qualifications and nationality requirements the Home Office demands of its recruits. The operational side of border controls should be conducted in a much more military manner. They should find a recently retired general to run it.'

There is, to Transport Secretary Justine Greening, a touch of the Inspector Clouseaus. In Westminster this week Miss Greening gave reporters a briefing about the high speed rail project.

At the end of the session she rose from her chair and strode towards a door, pulled it open and disappeared. Pause, polite coughs. Then her Press Officer Simon said sheepishly: 'Err, that's actually a cupboard, Minister !'



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What do you call a lightweight leader ??
Ed Milligram.

Strange stories from around the Globe



Incredible images emerged of a hulking freighter wearing mangled pieces of a steel bridge on its bow after a collision in south western Kentucky. In the pictures, the 312-foot Delta Mariner idles, still partially in the bridge's path, and clearly looks much too large to fit beneath the aging Eggner Ferry Bridge, which crosses the Kentucky Lake Reservoir. The cargo vessel was carrying space rocket parts for the United Launch Alliance, intended for a vehicle that was scheduled to be shot into orbit from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida. Two sections of the bridge, which is the only route across the lake and the Tennessee River, collapsed after the crash. Unbelievably no one was injured after the collision, though one driver described the harrowing experience of slamming on his brakes and stopping just a few feet short of oblivion after finding the bridge had suddenly disappeared.

For many customers who like to peruse sex shops, it is not always something which they want drawing to other people's attention. So you can imagine the horror for shoppers at one store when every time they entered or left the building, they were subjected to loud cheers from boozed-up builders in the pub opposite the road. Whenever the door to The Private Shop in Apsley, Hertfordshire, was opened, a loud bell would alert drinkers in The Bull pub opposite. Customers of the sex shop were then subjected to friendly banter and a loud 'wa-hey!'. Because of the embarrassment this caused for some of its regulars, the shop was forced to install a secluded side entrance.



The new Italian Lamborghini Gallardo police car at its unveiling ceremony, one of two new high speed patrol cars in the Italian police force !!!



Geography - Yanks Laughing Stock Again

Americans have become famous for their poor grasp of geography over recent years but you would expect one of the country's biggest TV stations to be a little bit more knowledgeable. Unfortunately there's bound to be a red face or two at CNN's headquarters today after an employee failed to locate London correctly on a map – placing it in Norfolk. The gaffe came when the graphic was used in a CNN news bulletin on Sunday to demonstrate where London is in a story about the phone hacking scandal. But instead of pinpointing London, the map placed the capital right where Norwich is – 120 miles away to the north-east. Cornwall was perfectly placed, though it is unclear what it had to do with the story. And it is a sizeable county, though you wouldn't think so from the map. This comes only a few weeks after Fox News managed to wipe Croatia completely from its map of Europe.



What a Dumb Ass

His only job was to guard the doors while his gang members robbed the bank. But even that simple task was too much for the latest contender for the unwanted title of world's clumsiest bank robber. For as his criminal colleagues held up the cashier in the small bank in Parana in Brazil he managed to drop his aim and fire off a round into his own foot. The clumsy robber can be seen in CCTV footage from the bank holding two guns at the entrance as his partners take a money bag. At first it appears that he is on top of his crucial role until he lowers his right arm and shot himself in the foot. He was then seen limping out into the street. But he was unable to avoid capture as he was arrested when he appeared at a nearby hospital for treatment.

I sat on the train this morning opposite a stunning Thai girl. I kept thinking to myself, please don't get an erection, please don't get an erection... but she did !!

Man calls 911 and says "I think my wife is dead" The operator says how do you know? He says "The sex is the same but the ironing is building up!"

USA Invents Friendly Fire Bullet



A bullet that can steer itself has been developed by national security researchers for widespread use by the army. US military researchers have developed the technology that will see regular army soldiers shooting with the accuracy of snipers. In fact the four-inch-long, dart-like bullet is so effective that it can hit a target, guided by a laser, two kilometers away. It works through an optical sensor in the nose of the bullet which detects a laser beam on a target. The sensor then sends information to guidance and control electronics that uses an algorithm to calculate direction. The bullet then steers itself, via tiny fins, to the target. The game-changing ammunition was designed by Sandia – the US government arm which develops science technologies to improve national security.

Kraut Mouse Copulates With Trout !!

THE SEXES

Paid To Do It, But Fails To Make His Friend's Wife Pregnant After 72 Attempts

In Stuttgart, Germany, a court judge must decide on a case of honorable intentions in a situation where a man hired his neighbor to get his wife pregnant.

It seems that Demetrius Soupolos, 29, and his former beauty queen wife, Traute, wanted a child badly, but Demetrius was told by a doctor that he was sterile.

So Soupolos, after calming his wife's protests, hired his neighbor, Frank Maus, 34, to impregnate her. Since Maus was already married and the father of two children, plus looked very much like Soupolos to boot, the plan seemed good.

Soupolos paid Maus \$2,500 for the job and for three evenings a week for the next six months,

Maus tried desperately, a total of 72 different times, to impregnate Traute.

When his own wife objected, he explained, "I don't like this any more than you. I'm simply doing it for the money. Try and understand."

When Traute failed to get pregnant after six months, however, Soupolos was not understanding and insisted that Maus have a medical examination, which he did.

The doctor's announcement that Maus was also sterile shocked everyone except his wife, who was forced to confess that Maus was not the real father of their two children.

Now Soupolos is suing Maus for breach of contract in an effort to get his money back, but Maus refuses to give it up because he said he did not guarantee conception, but only that he would give an honest effort.

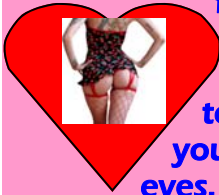


Pattaya Cricket Club



Fantasy House For Valentines

At this special time of year for Romantics, old Roués and first timers, get down to Fantasy House and view our Valentine's Collection. There is something exciting for all including latterday Lotharios and quixotic couples. Get your partner a gift to bring a sparkle to their eyes. We can supply your dream boat all year !!



Comments from Customers:

*'After Xmas, it gets a bit flat so Valentines Day should pump up the action again. I can't wait for Easter and the chocolate love eggs !'
'I had a ball at the New Year sales. Some real bargains amongst the slightly used and shop soiled items. Duracell and Kleenex must be making a fortune.'*

'This is a friendly, family run business with the customer in mind. Repeat visits are encouraged as the stock is always changing and the products are top-of-the-range at great prices!'

'Err, me Mam won't let me go cos she's a spoilsport. I get in through the back door and spend the day looking at the gear. It's much better than school !!'



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Don't Ya just Love The French

France has neither winter nor summer nor morals. Apart from these drawbacks it is a fine country. France has usually been governed by prostitutes.
Mark Twain

I would rather have a German division in front of me than a French one behind me.
General George S. Patton

Going to war without France is like going deer hunting without your accordion.
General Norman Schwarzkopf

The only time France wants us to go to war is when the German Army is sitting in Paris sipping coffee!
Regis Philbin

We can stand here like the French, or we can do something about it !
Marge Simpson

The last time the French asked for 'more proof' it came marching into Paris under a German flag.
David Letterman

The AP and UPI reported that the French Government announced after the London bombings that it has raised its terror alert level from Run to Hide. The only two higher levels in France are Surrender and Collaborate.

The French Government announced today that it is imposing a ban on the use of fireworks at Euro Disney. The decision comes the day after a nightly fireworks display at the park, located just 30 miles outside of Paris, caused the soldiers at a nearby French Army garrison to surrender to a group of Czech tourists.

JFK'S Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was in France in the early 60's when DeGaulle decided to pull out of NATO. DeGaulle said he wanted all US military out of France as soon as possible. Rusk responded:

"Does that include those who are buried here?"

You could have heard a pin drop.

Bugatti Type 59



Below is a very rare 1/3rd size battery driven model. In the car is Steve Russell who currently lives in Beijing. c1946



Steve Russell, circa 1946, in his battery power 1/3rd size Bugatti Type 59.
I'll bet he wished he held on to it !!

Nanny Knows Best - As Always

The recent flurries of snow have brought about something of a collective madness in the behaviour and mindset of our "beloved" and "respected" local councils.



For reasons best known to themselves councils up and down the country have been beheading and destroying snowmen constructed in public areas and parks.

Council workers smashed the heads of snowmen on the Homefield Recreation Ground in Chiswick. When the workmen were challenged about their

snowmanicide, their excuse was that they were "protecting the grass".

What??

It is estimated that around 50 snowmen and several igloos were destroyed by the council workmen there. I understand that saws were used to decapitate some!

Other snowmanicides have been reported in Cambridge and Enfield.

Hounslow Council claim that they had no knowledge of their employees actions, and that the snowmanicide had not been sanctioned. Council workmen in Enfield were easy to spot when they were committing snowmanicide. How so?

They were wearing Hi Vis jackets!



Finally - Stories from another place !!



Harry Redknapp's dog has described her five year sentence for tax evasion as 'feeling like I've had my nose rubbed in it'. Reclusive bone-fan Rosie was found guilty of having an undeclared bank account in Monaco, but maintains her innocence.

"I'm not the most financially astute dumb animal", claimed Rosie. "You could say I have no concept of money. Normally when my owner gives me a cheque for £180,000, I tear it to pieces or bury it in the garden. I have no idea how this one slipped through my paws and ended up in a tax-efficient savings account. Also, a five stretch is a very harsh sentence if you convert it into dog years."

Harry Redknapp has distanced himself from his former pet, claiming her behaviour is a bad influence on him. "First she craps in my slippers, then she tries to defraud Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs officers", declared Redknapp. "I've a good mind to sell her to Wigan".



Passing sentence on the greedy bitch, Justice Timmins said he had no choice but to lock her up, in case she tried appealing to the upper chamber with her big, brown eyes. "Bad doggy", declared Timmins. "Baaad, baaad doggy." Rosie asked for two other cases of rolling in fox shit to be taken into consideration.



Capello Acapello Resigns After FA Give Wrong Signals



Fabio Capello last night stood accused of abandoning the ship of English football before the disaster of England playing in Euro 2012 has played out to its natural, grim conclusion. The Italian, who claimed to have tripped and fallen into resigning, was unrepentant about his decision, and clearly hoped to save his own skin before he became irrevocably associated with the tragic debacle of England playing in the tournament this summer.



FA Executive Fred Michaels said, "Under English footballing law, the manager must be the last to leave, no matter how awful the events on the pitch. To leave whilst the team is still struggling for survival, no matter how unlikely, is pure cowardice." Details of a phone conversation have emerged where Capello was ordered back by the FA to play more dire, directionless football until all hope was lost and England were mathematically unable to proceed from the group stages of the competition. Only then would he be free to take a cushy job as a pundit, glibly pointing out the mistakes of others from a warm studio on dry land. But Capello refused, despite being clearly off course and the team was doomed to go down with all hands on deck.

Capello resigns

Fans were united in their condemnation of Capello. John Richards from London said, "Look at Steve McClaren. Stayed at the helm way beyond the call of duty, soaking and cold, offering what meagre help he could to his doomed comrades. Or Graham Taylor. Hit a massive iceberg qualifying for USA '94 but was the epitome of Englishness as he remained in his post even when it became clear they were never going to reach their destination safely. In fact, that was obvious pretty much from when they set off."

It is said that on some nights Taylor's tragic voice can still be heard above the wind, vainly shouting, "Can we not knock it?" FA Executive Charlie Jones concurred, "The old rules still apply. It's women and Theo Walcott first."