



# THE BBC AND BREXIT

SURVEY OF BBC RADIO 4  
'BREXIT: A LOVE STORY?'

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## Summary

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**Brexit: A Love Story?** was a BBC Radio 4 factual series presented by Mark Mardell – presenter of BBC Radio 4's World This Weekend news programme - broadcast on a fortnightly basis between March and September 2018.

The series, which consisted of 13 parts of roughly 19 minutes broadcast in Radio 4's World at One. It was thus projected to listeners as a news and current affairs segment.

The total running time was 245 minutes or 38,000 words. It purported to give an overview of the relationship between the UK and the EEC/EU since 1972, looking in particular at the factors which might have led to 'souring' and the decision to leave in 2016.

There were 121 guest contributors who were a mix of senior civil servants, government advisers, figures drawn from the world of the media, and a small sprinkling of 'experts' Between, them the speakers contributed 22,000 words.

News-watch tracked and analysed all the programme transcripts using accepted academic media analysis methodology. The core findings are that it was seriously skewed towards pro-EU opinion and thus breached BBC impartiality requirements:

Although there was only a slight numeric advantage in favour of 'pro' EU/EEC contributors, those speakers delivered 64 per cent (13,392) of the words spoken, against 28 per cent (6,009 words) from the 'antis', a ratio of 9:4. In addition, of the top 10 contributors by running length, eight were 'pros' and only two were 'anti'. Strong Europhiles such as Tony Blair, Nick Clegg and Sir Stephen Wall had much more space to advance their 'pro' opinions than those who were negative about 'Europe'.

This skew towards 'pro' EU/EEC opinion was very much worsened because Mark Mardell was not impartial. Much of his contribution, together with the editing and structuring of the programme, sought to establish that the UK-EU relationship had turned sour because those who hated the EU had poisoned public opinion against it.

The factors he cited included Margaret Thatcher's love of conflict; the British press, who, he worked hard to demonstrate, had lied and exaggerated problems emanating from Brussels; 'obsessive' Tory rebels who were determined to sabotage Maastricht despite the public not being concerned; the 'blokeish' Nigel Farage, who had opportunistically used events outside the EU's control to force David Cameron to hold a referendum; and David Cameron himself, who, it was claimed, had made grave miscalculations in his decision to hold a referendum at all, and then compounded the mistake by – unlike Harold Wilson in 1975 – taking part in the 'Remain' campaign.

Other elements of Mardell's bias were a failure to explore – 'bias by omission' – that the reasons for rising Euroscepticism in the UK were rooted in greater integration, a mounting threat to British sovereignty, and a huge rise in immigration. He instead claimed that discontent with the EU was based on factors outside its control, such as the financial crash of 2007/8.

## Introduction

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'Brexit: A Love Story?' was a thirteen-part series, broadcast between March and September 2018 as part of Radio 4's lunchtime news and current affairs programme, *The World at One*. The series was also made available as a podcast, and for download through iPlayer from its dedicated web page.<sup>1</sup>

The first episode was part of a special day of Radio 4 EU-related programming entitled 'Britain at the Crossroads', marking one year before the UK's scheduled departure from the European Union.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent editions were generally broadcast at fortnightly intervals.<sup>3</sup> Pre-publicity had indicated that the series would comprise twelve parts<sup>4</sup>, but ultimately there were thirteen.<sup>5</sup>

'Brexit: A Love Story' was presented by BBC journalist (and the Corporation's former Europe Editor) Mark Mardell. He described it thus:

Each episode will look at one event during the UK's membership of the EU, retelling the story of a fascinating and complex relationship - and asking whether the tensions and contradictions which ultimately led the UK to choose to leave the EU were evident from the beginning.<sup>6</sup>

Mark Mardell asked, in his introduction, 'Was the UK's relationship with Europe ever really amorous, ever less than lukewarm marriage of convenience?' He explained he would be examining snapshots from the 45-year relationship, hearing 'the inside story, told by those who were there at critical points', and looking at these moments 'under odd lights and at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now.'

His narrative followed a timeline beginning in 1973 and culminating in the post-referendum present, although episode 5, 'Up Your, Delors!' diverted from the linear arc to offer a thematic exploration of the role of the British press in 'shaping the British mood', and episode 13, 'An Island Nation' served as an overview of the series, and included some content repeated from early episodes.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p062h50y](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p062h50y)

<sup>2</sup> News-watch monitored all the EU content aired as part of the 'Britain at the Crossroads' strand, and its findings are available here: <http://news-watch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/News-watch-Survey-of-Radio-4s-Britain-at-the-Crossroads.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Episode two was broadcast on a Friday (all other editions were on Thursdays) and there was a delay of three weeks between episodes 10 and 11.

<sup>4</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/r4-year-out-from-brexit?lang=gd](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/r4-year-out-from-brexit?lang=gd)

<sup>5</sup> It is not clear if the original press release was mistaken, or if an extra edition was added after the series began broadcasting.

<sup>6</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/r4-year-out-from-brexit?lang=cy](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/r4-year-out-from-brexit?lang=cy)

The thirteen editions were as follows:<sup>7</sup>

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary</b>
1	Fanfare for the Future	29 March 2018	Mark Mardell explores the UK's 45 year love affair with Europe, starting with the role that Edward Heath - the Prime Minister at the time - had in negotiating entry into the common market.
2	Yes to Britain in Europe	13 April 2018	The 1975 referendum to remain in the European Economic Community was a historic first for Britain. As well as dividing the country, the argument split the Labour Party, who were then in Government.
3	Battling Maggie's Blues	26 April 2018	It's 1979, Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative government have been voted into power in Britain, and one of her first tasks is to reduce the contribution the UK pays to the European Economic Community.
4	From Bruges to Bust	10 May 2018	After her success renegotiating the EEC budget, Margaret Thatcher gave a speech at the College de Europe in Bruges, now widely considered to be a Eurosceptic battle cry. But was it ever meant to be?
5	Up Yours Delors!	24 May 2018	Stepping away from this series' timeline, Mark Mardell considers what role the press had in influencing public opinion about the European Union during its 45 year relationship with Britain.
6	Major's Bastards and the Battle of Maastricht	07 June 2018	Tensions rise in the Conservative Party as the Prime Minister negotiates with the European Community member states in Maastricht.
7	Major and the Mad Cows	22 June 2018	In 1990, the agriculture minister fed his daughter a beef burger in front of the TV cameras to prove British beef was safe. But five years later, the government was forced to admit a link between BSE and a new, human disease.
8	The Most Successful Party That Never Won A Seat	05 July 2018	A blustering billionaire playing politics, or a brave man doing his best for his country? Sir James Goldsmith divided opinion, but he united both sides of politics in promising a referendum on the euro.
9	Blair Brown and a Bike Ride	19 July 2018	In 1997, Tony Blair swept to power with New Labour and Britain won the Eurovision song contest with Katrina and the Waves. Was there also a renewed enthusiasm for the European project?
10	Pole Position	02 Aug 2018	The European Union started with just 6 member countries. Over the years 6 more - including the United Kingdom - joined the community. But it was in 2004 when the single largest expansion saw 10 more countries join in one go. And with membership came freedom of movement.
11	Banging on About Europe	24 Aug 2018	How much can one man do? During his first speech as Conservative Party leader, David Cameron insisted the party needed to stop "banging on about Europe". So how did he come to promise an in-out referendum 7 years later?
12	Five Miscalculations and a resignation	6 Sep 2018	When the Conservatives won the 2015 election, David Cameron reiterated his manifesto promise to hold an in-out referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. Not long after, the starting gun was fired and the battle lines drawn.
13	An Island Nation	20 Sep 2018	In 1973, there were celebrations when Britain joined the European Community. But there were always those against the UK being part of the project. Over the next 45 years, there were debates and clashes, headlines and speeches; everyone speaking just as passionately about membership, regardless of which side they were on.

<sup>7</sup> Summaries in the table are taken from the programme's iPlayer page, with spelling and grammar errors corrected where appropriate.

# PART 1: STATISTICS

News-watch monitored all thirteen editions of 'Brexit: A Love Story'. Each edition was fully transcribed and episode content was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, using News-watch's established methodology.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.1 Airtime

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In total, 'Brexit: A Love Story?' delivered approximately 4 hours and 5 minutes of content across its thirteen editions. Episode duration ranged between 17 min 30 sec (Edition 4) and 20 min 30 sec (Edition 9) and average length of each edition was 18 min 50 sec.

Edition	Title	Date	Duration
1	Fanfare for the Future	29 March 2018	18 min 15 sec
2	Yes to Britain in Europe	13 April 2018	17 min 30 sec
3	Battling Maggie's Blues	26 April 2018	17 min 45 sec
4	From Bruges to Bust	10 May 2018	18 min
5	Up Yours Delors!	24 May 2018	18 min 45 sec
6	Major's Bastards and the Battle of Maastricht	07 June 2018	18 min 30 sec
7	Major and the Mad Cows	22 June 2018	19 min 15 sec
8	The Most Successful Party That Never Won A Seat	05 July 2018	18 min 45 sec
9	Blair Brown and a Bike Ride	19 July 2018	20 min 30 sec
10	Pole Position	02 Aug 2018	18 min
11	Banging on About Europe	24 Aug 2018	20 min
12	Five Miscalculations and a resignation	6 Sep 2018	20 min
13	An Island Nation	20 Sep 2018	20 min

## 1.2 Speakers

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**In total, 121 guest speakers** contributed to 'Brexit: A Love Story?' over its thirteen episodes. Each broadcast was treated as a discrete unit of analysis, thus guests who appeared in more than one edition were counted each time they appeared.

News-watch's long-established approach excludes BBC journalists and presenters from the speaker calculations, and only 'external' speakers are coded. However, 'Brexit: A Love Story?' included a number of montage sequences, which included archive clips of newsreaders and correspondents. While some were clearly BBC staff, other voices were impossible to identify with certainty. Given that these sequences were generally neutral or factual in tone (and often on

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix I

subjects unrelated to the EU) these brief clips were excluded from the speaker calculations contained within this section.

News-watch categorised each contributor according to the opinions they gave on the EU, the EEC or Brexit. The results were as follows:

**58 speakers (48%)** offered a positive opinion on the EU (or former EEC) or a negative opinion on Brexit.

**50 speakers (41%)** Offered a negative opinion on the EU (or former EEC) or a positive opinion on Brexit.

**13 speakers (11%)** offered a neutral, factual or mixed view on the EU or Brexit.

**29 speakers (24%) were ‘firm’ withdrawalists** in that they had voted or campaigned for Britain to leave the EU during either the 1975 or 2016 referendums.<sup>9</sup>

Coding was undertaken based on *content* of each contribution, rather than making an assumption based on a particular speaker’s wider political position or core beliefs. As guests were categorised on a per-episode basis, this resulted in a small number of contributors being included in two categories, if their viewpoints differed between two or more editions.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.3 Word Counts

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The transcripts were analysed to calculate the space given to each speaker and to provide an indication of the division of airtime between broadly pro- and broadly anti-EU opinion.

As detailed in the previous section, there were eight more pro-EU speakers than anti-EU speakers across the thirteen editions. However, an analysis of the words spoken revealed a far more striking disparity.

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<sup>9</sup> Half of the remaining 20 anti-EU contributions were from short vox pop contributors who were generally antipathetic towards the EU (often on the grounds of immigration) but didn’t advocate leaving; the rest were from Eurosceptics who spoke negatively about the EU, but did not advocate withdrawal.

<sup>10</sup> For example, archive clips of Margaret Thatcher were featured in five of the thirteen episodes. Three appearances were coded as pro-EU (she had campaigned in 1975 for Britain to remain in the Common Market), and two appearances were coded as anti-EU, on account of the Eurosceptic tone of her 1988 Bruges Speech.

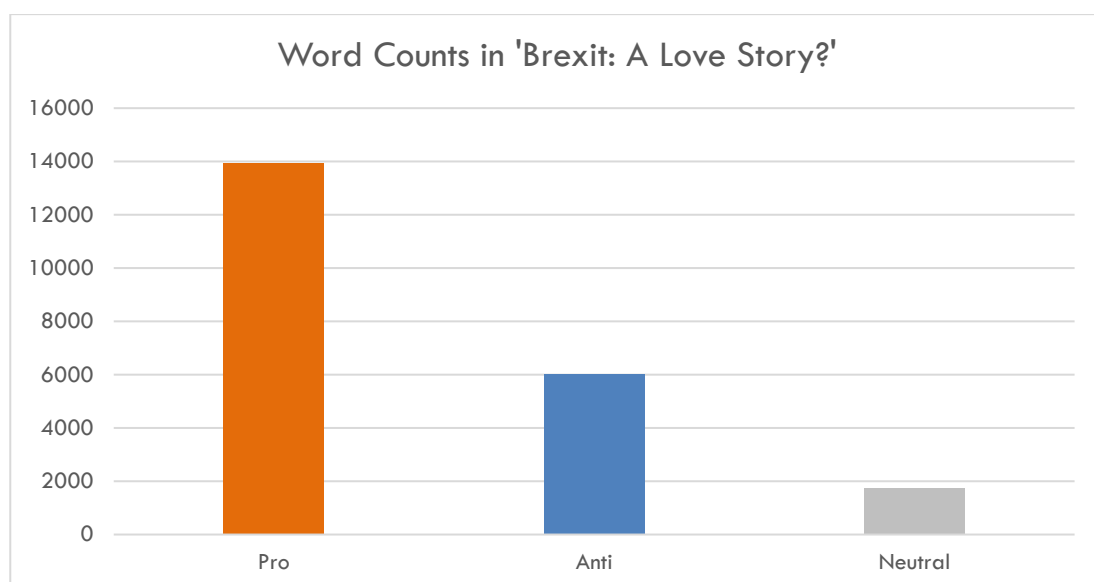
The average length of a broadly pro-EU contribution was exactly twice that of a broadly anti-EU contribution (240 words to just 120 words)<sup>11</sup> The overall eight-speaker difference was thus magnified, leading to a very significant weighting towards pro-EU opinion.

In total, the 121 guest contributors delivered **21,701 words**.

**13,932 words (64%)** from speakers who offered a positive opinion on the EU (or EEC), or a negative opinion on Brexit.

**6,009 words (28%)** from guests who offered a negative opinion on the EU (or EEC), or a positive opinion on Brexit.

**1,760 speakers (8%)** from guests who offered a neutral or factual view on the EU, EEC or Brexit.



## 1.3 Archive and Contemporary

The series carried two distinct styles of contribution: archive recordings, with speakers commenting on historical events as they occurred, and contemporary interviews conducted specifically for inclusion in the series.

The full cohort of speakers were categorised according to whether they were included in the series as archive or contemporary contributors.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Speakers providing a neutral or factual perspective were allotted an average of 135 words per appearance.

<sup>12</sup> Two speakers – the Liberal Democrat Shirley Williams and the Conservative David Mellor – appeared in both archive and contemporary form, each in the space of a single episode, and therefore they appear in both lists, with their word counts divided



### Archive Contributions:

There were **54 archive clips**, totalling **3,257 words**

14 speakers were pro-EU (885 words) (27%)

35 speakers were anti-EU (2,176) (67%)

5 were offered a neutral or factual opinion (196 words) (6%)

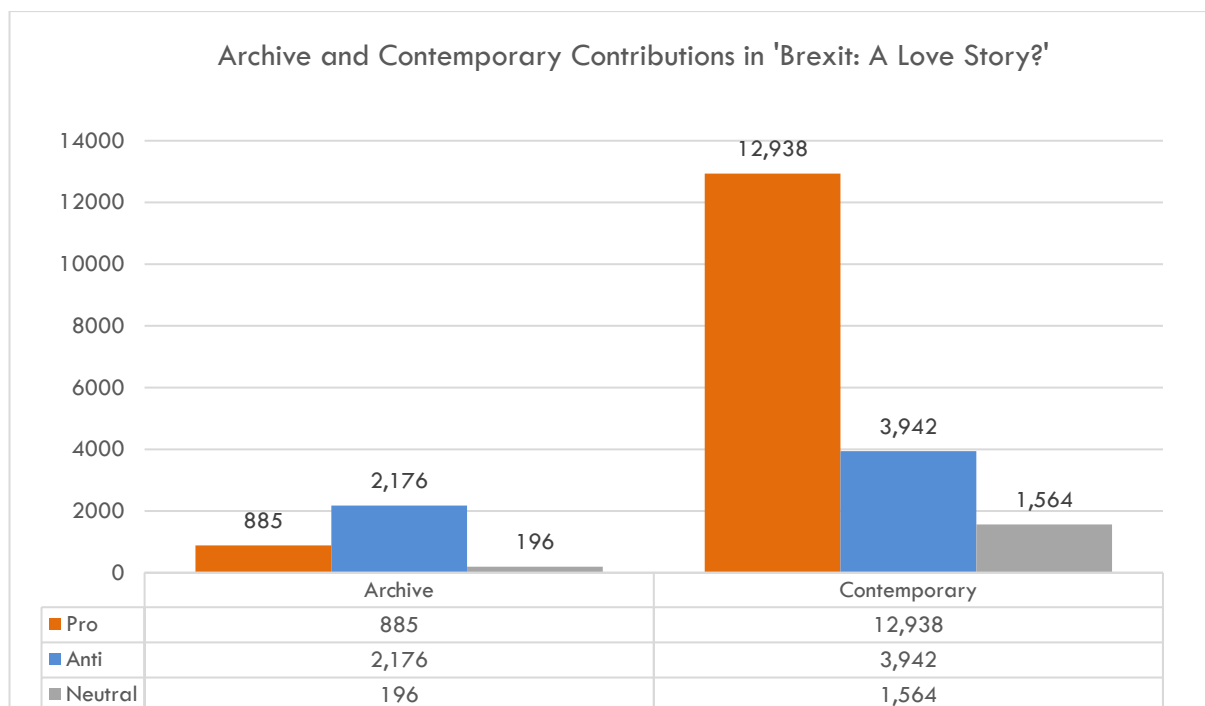
### Contemporary Contributions:

There were **69 contemporary contributions**, amounting to **18,444 words**

46 speakers were pro EU (12,938) (70% of words)

15 speakers were anti-European (3,942) (21% of words)

8 speakers were neutral/factual (1,564) (8% of words)



The 'contemporary' interviewees had clear advantages. They were generally afforded more space to make detailed arguments, and were thus able to provide a more wide-ranging analysis which benefited heavily from hindsight. By contrast, archive clips tended to be shorter, and often featured opinions which were antiquated or fixed in the debates of a particular era.

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accordingly. This means that there are 123 contributors listed between the two tables, rather than the 121 recorded for the survey as a whole.

## 1.4 Politicians

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Of the 121 speakers who contributed to the thirteen editions, 69 (55%) were politicians, peers or party employees from the main UK political parties. They delivered 59% of the total words spoken by guest contributors.

Party	Speakers	Words	Percentage
Conservative Party	42	7,251	56%
Labour Party	18	3,833	30%
Liberal Democrats	5	1,110	9%
UKIP	4	659	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>12,853</b>	<b>100%</b>

Political opinion in the series was heavily weighted towards speakers from the Conservative Party, who received twice as much space as Labour and 11 times more space than UKIP.

## 1.5 Most Quoted Speakers

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The ten speakers with the greatest overall contributions were as follows:

Name	Party/Title/Organisation	Episodes	Words
Tony Blair	Labour Party	4	1,680
Lord Armstrong	PPS to Ted Heath and Cabinet Secretary to Margaret Thatcher	3	1,017
Lord Hill	Conservative Party, former EU Commissioner	2	747
Nick Clegg	Liberal Democrats	2	690
Charles Powell	Private Secretary to Mrs Thatcher	3	688
Sir Stephen Wall	British Ambassador to the EU	2	681
Christine Lord	Mother of man who died from vCJD	1	675
Peter Lilley	Conservative Party	2	616
Lord Hannay	Former Ambassador to UN and Brussels	3	602
Margaret Thatcher	Conservative Party	5	565

Former Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was allotted the most space, and was allowed to defend his government's record on immigration over 1,680 words. Of the ten, only Peter Lilley supported leaving the EU, although he noted in his commentary that he had campaigned for Britain to remain in the EU during the 1975 referendum.

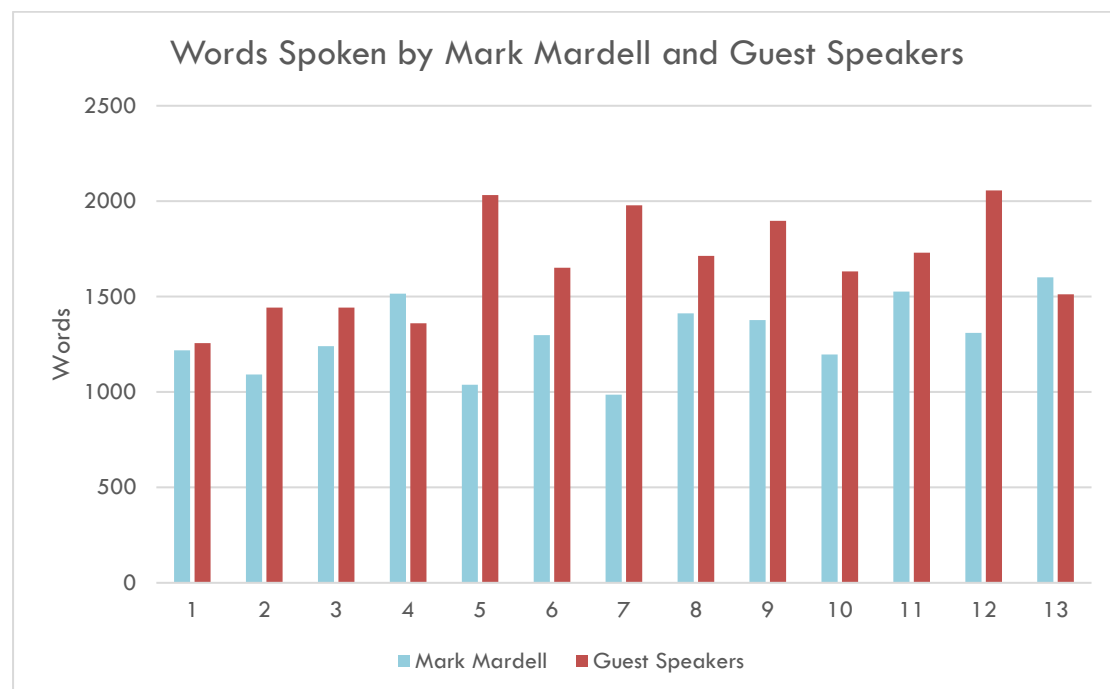
By contrast, UKIP leader Nigel Farage appeared in just one episode, with soundbites totalling just 134 words, a proportion of which was taken up on him explaining the correct pronunciation of his name.

## 1.6 Contributions from Mark Mardell

Presenter Mark Mardell's personal contribution to 'Brexit: A Love Story?' was significant: his narration accounted for 16,810 words, or 43.6% of the words spoken across the thirteen editions.<sup>13</sup>

	Title	Date	Mardell	Guests
1	Fanfare for the Future	29 March 2018	1,218	1,256
2	Yes to Britain in Europe	13 April 2018	1,092	1,442
3	Battling Maggie's Blues	26 April 2018	1,240	1,442
4	From Bruges to Bust	10 May 2018	1,515	1,360
5	Up Yours Delors!	24 May 2018	1,038	2,032
6	Major's Bastards and the Battle of Maastricht	07 June 2018	1,298	1,651
7	Major and the Mad Cows	22 June 2018	986	1,978
8	The Most Successful Party That Never Won A Seat	05 July 2018	1,412	1,713
9	Blair Brown and a Bike Ride	19 July 2018	1,377	1,897
10	Pole Position	02 Aug 2018	1,197	1,632
11	Banging on About Europe	24 Aug 2018	1,526	1,730
12	Five Miscalculations and a resignation	6 Sep 2018	1,310	2,056
13	An Island Nation	20 Sep 2018	1,601	1,512
<b>Total</b>			<b>16,810</b>	<b>21,701</b>

In two editions (Episode 4, 'From Bruges to Bust' and the Episode 13, 'An Island Nation') Mr Mardell delivered more commentary than the other guests combined. The overall ratio underlines the centrality of his own opinions to the series as a whole.



<sup>13</sup> For the purpose of this calculation, archive clips from BBC and non-BBC journalists, and short contributions from speakers who did not speak directly about the EU have been discounted.

# PART 2: ANALYSIS

In summary, **Brexit: a Love Story?** was a 13-part series presented by Mark Mardell about the British relationship with the EEC/EU spanning the period broadly 1972 to the present. The declared fulcrum of exploration was why the relationship had turned sour. It was a tightly-edited tapestry of anecdotes, opinions and analysis delivered partly through the words of contributors in key developments and partly through questioning of participants, personal opinions and explanatory narrative by and from presenter Mark Mardell. The series ran for a total four hours and five minutes and comprised of around 38,000 words on EEC/EU-related matters, almost 22,000 of them from the 121 guest speakers, the rest from Mr Mardell.

## 2.1 Key Points from Quantitative Analysis

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The contributors were primarily a mix of senior civil servants, senior politicians, government advisors, figures drawn from the world of the media and newspapers, and a small sprinkling of 'experts'.

A striking factor to emerge from the detailed analysis in the first section and that which follows below is that speakers who were sympathetic to the EEC/EU were given considerably more space than those who were not. Section 2 and 3 summarise the 'pro' and 'anti' points made, and reveal the imbalance towards the 'pro' side. In the editorial efforts towards working out the dynamics of the UK-EEC/EU relationship, it appears that for whatever reason, such views were deemed to be the most important.

Not all the words spoken can be classed as partisan or on a binary axis; many were anecdotal descriptions of events. Of course, content cannot be framed according to rigid formulas. However, the partisan views which were expressed determined to a major extent the overall direction and texture of the series, and were edited to give Mr Mardell the springboard to fashion a range of core judgements, including – for example – that press misconduct and Margaret Thatcher's love of conflict were responsible for poisoning attitudes to the EE. The 'pro' side was embellished at every turn through deeper exploration and explanation than was afforded to the 'anti' perspective.

The breakdown of the figures is that 13 speakers were neutral, 58 were 'pro' (the EU or Remain) and 50 were 'anti' (against the EU, pro-Brexit). This small imbalance favoured the 'pro' side. Much bigger discrepancies emerge in the word counts. 64 per cent (13,932 words) of the 21,760 words delivered by contributors were 'pro' and 28 per cent 'anti' (6,009 words). This was a

skew in favour of 'pro' of 9:4. Another measure of the imbalance is that the 58 'pro' speakers contributed an average of 240 words each, which was exactly double the 120 words each from the 50 'anti'.

The programme was formed of a mixture of archive clips and specially-recorded material. Section 1 shows that 35 speakers in the archive section were 'anti', compared with 14 who were 'pro', a ratio of 5:2. The archive speakers were deliberately edited to make specific points to support the editorial structuring of the programme.

The contemporary contributions – those gathered especially for the programme - were made up of 46 'pro' speakers (who delivered 12,938 words, 70 per cent of the contributors' total), compared to 15 who were 'anti, a ratio of 3:1. Another way of looking at this is that the 'pro' speakers had much more space to develop their respective perspectives.

It is striking that of the contemporary 'anti' contributions, when they are closely analysed, only six - those from John Redwood, Lord Monckton, Alexa Phillips, Daniel Hannan, Theresa Villiers and Lord Howard - made substantive points against the EU, such as that mistakes by David Cameron made it possible to start talking about EU issues, that the EU could not contemplate reform and that the EU was 'far larger in scope' than the EEC and undermined national sovereignty. Their detailed points are outlined in Section 3.1 below.

By contrast, the 'pro' speakers in their contemporary contributions made a very wide range of positive points about the EU – detailed in Section 3.2 – including that the 'project' was created to ensure peace, that it was exciting in the 1970s to 'become Europeans', that referendums should not decide democratic issues because Hitler and Mussolini had filched power by using them, that Margaret Thatcher was 'an aggressive English nationalist' in her approach to the EU, that Thatcher had based her negative attitudes towards German on prejudice, that Boris Johnson, while at the Daily Telegraph in the 1990s invented stories against the EU, that Maastricht had created the false impression that the UK could choose its own terms of EU membership, that the Major government had not properly engaged with the EU over the BSE problems, that the EU – despite its unpopularity – was a 'necessary part of Britain's place in the world', that immigration from the EU did not impact British jobs, that Nigel Farage and other Brexit supporters were 'cartoon characters', and that the issue of the relationship with the EU should not have been settled by a referendum.

The 'most quoted speakers' section at 1.5 above further underlines the extent of the selectivity and imbalance. For example, eight of the top ten made observations strongly supportive of the EU/EEC, led by Tony Blair with 1,680 words. This compared to only 2,176 words afforded to all the 35 'anti' archive speakers. Of course, there were not as many individual points in the Blair interview sequences as in the 35 archive slots, but he had the time to explain his perspective expansively – with only minimal challenge from Mark Mardell – whereas the archive 'anti'

speakers did not. Only 29 speakers, amounting to 24 per cent of contributors, were supporters of withdrawal from the EU. News-watch research has highlighted that the BBC has historically massively under-represented such views<sup>14</sup>, and this was also the case in this series.

A very important component of the Brexit: a Love Story? was the volume of contributions by presenter Mark Mardell. He delivered a total of 16,810 words across the 13 programmes, an average of almost 1300 words per episode and almost 40 per cent of all the words spoken in the series. His input shaped every aspect of the series' direction and analysis.

This was a highly idiosyncratic account of the UK's alleged love-hate relationship with the EU', as is evidenced by the near equivalence in the numbers of 'pro' and 'anti' speakers. It was presumably edited with the aim of meeting, across the series as a whole, the BBC's impartiality Guidelines. An important question is thus why such a disproportionate amount of 'pro' opinion was included. The territory was one of intense public controversy culminating in 2016 with a 52/48 percent vote to leave the EU. Yet the bulk of the opinion of contributors (the exact content of which was determined of course by the programme editors), when views were expressed, was positive towards the EU/EEC. The imbalance was made very substantially worse by Mark Mardell, who – as is demonstrated in subsequent sections – amplified throughout the importance of the EU and worked hard to question and undermine the limited amount of counter-opinion which was included.

## 2.2 Bias by Omission

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As noted above, the series purportedly presented an overview of Britain's relationship with the EEC/EU over 45 years. It set out to explore the 'fascinating and complex' dynamic between the UK and the EU/EEC. Mark Mardell declared that he had created a series of impressionistic snapshots which illustrated why the 'love story' had turned sour.

In practice – as is shown in later sections – his approach placed strong, disproportionate emphasis on that the 'souring' had been fomented not by the EU itself but by factors such as:

- A mixture of uncontrollable events such the 'Mad Cow' scare, the financial crisis of 2007/8, and the rising tide of immigration from Africa and the Middle East
- Political and strategic ineptitude by British politicians, particularly John Major and David

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<sup>14</sup> As is outlined in detail in this report: <http://news-watch.co.uk/bbc-bias-by-omission-leave-and-the-left-october-2017/>

## Cameron

- Apathy and ambivalence towards the euro from Tony Blair and Gordon Brown
- Divisions and 'civil war' in the Conservative party which, it was posited, were engineered by a small 'obsessive' faction of 26 rebel MPs as the Maastricht Treaty was debated in Parliament
- The deliberate creation of antagonism and conflict towards the EEC/EU, as well as outright lying about the way it operated by figures such as Margaret Thatcher, James Goldsmith, Boris Johnson, two press barons and Kelvin Makenzie, the former editor of the Sun

The identifying of these factors by the series as being responsible for the 'souring' of the UK-EEC/EU relationship diverted attention away from consideration of factors inherent in, or generated by the 'European project'.

In this vein, the programme underplayed or ignored many highly-relevant key elements in the relationship which were of particular importance to 'Leave' voters and those opposed to the 'EU project'. This was bias by omission. Of course, the series had limited space but the editors found time to explore, and placed central emphasis upon, the 'pro' factors outlined above. No such equivalence<sup>15</sup> was afforded to the 'anti' side. The areas of underplaying/omission included:

- Discussion about the progressive impact of membership of the EEC/EU on British sovereignty either at accession or as moves towards further integration intensified was minimal. One of the few mentions of the issue was in episode one. Lord Armstrong, Edward Heath's PPS claimed that the sovereignty issue was not (to Heath) important at accession because 'the project' in those days was primarily economic. Mark Mardell did not challenge him on this, even though Eurosceptics have argued for years that, during the accession period, Heath was at best disingenuous, and at worst lied about the EEC's future plans<sup>15</sup>, and was fully aware of an internal EEC report written before the UK joined which revealed that a core objective was full economic and monetary union.
- There was also only minimal exploration of Eurosceptic concerns about the alleged lack of democracy in EU structures. Consideration was limited primarily to two short 1970s archive clips from Tony Benn and Roy Jenkins, the former saying that unelected Brussels commissioners had more power than he did as a government minister, the latter that the council of ministers and the Commission were democratically accountable.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, a speech given by Christopher Booker to the Bruges Group in 2001 in which he discussed Cabinet papers released that year under the 30-year rule: <http://campaignforanindependentbritain.org.uk/britain-europe-bruges-group/>

- The extent and nature of worries about, and the impact of, immigration from the EU was seriously underplayed in the episode devoted to the topic. Tony Blair and David Blunkett both had very ample space to put their case that the influx from the EU was beneficial and did not affect UK workers. Their perspective was buttressed by the input of the strongly pro-immigration economist Christian Dustmann, the sole such ‘expert’ to appear in the series. Some balance to these perspectives was given when Lord Howard said briefly that the 2004 influx could have been delayed, but his point was heavily swamped by the Blair/Blunkett contributions. Mark Mardell further minimised the impact of immigration by contending that electors confused EU immigration with that from elsewhere, and thus overplayed its (the EU’s) importance in causing problems. He implied that if voters had opted for Leave because of perceived problems flowing from EU-related immigration and EU policies, they had been mistaken.
- The attitudes of senior EU figures towards the UK, and their role in generating negativity in the relationship, was also largely ignored. Eurosceptics argue strongly that intransigence by the EU towards reform – and its determined espousal of closer integration, especially that emanating from the Commission – have been the root cause of the UK dislike and mistrust of Brussels. But in this vein, there were only two EU contributions. One was from Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner at the time of the BSE crisis, who attacked the UK’s lack of support for the beef export ban and blamed it on the ‘populist’ media in the UK. The second EU speaker was Günter Verheugen, the former enlargement commissioner, who claimed that the UK had been his greatest ally in steps towards the expansion of 2004, and, by implication, was a strong supporter of immigration from the new EU countries.

## 2.2 Why was the title ‘Brexit: A Love Story?’ chosen?

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The title miscast the UK-EU relationship by inflating its importance and complexity. An example of this is that in his conclusion, Mardell likened the Brexit process to the physical separation of conjoined (‘Siamese’) twins, and thus projected that this was an extremely risky and potentially fatal operation for both sides<sup>16</sup>.

His general approach conveyed that this was a very special relationship when arguably, from a less enthusiastically pro-EU perspective, it could have been projected that for the UK, it was

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<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia describes separation as follows: ‘Most cases of separation are extremely risky and life-threatening. In many cases, the surgery results in the death of one or both of the twins, particularly if they are joined at the head or share a vital organ. This makes the ethics of surgical separation, where the twins can survive if not separated contentious. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conjoined\\_twins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conjoined_twins)



never more than the equivalent of joining a golf club or a gym in furtherance of economic self-interest.

Throughout, Mardell also underplayed the underlying reasons for the extent of UK opinion against the EEC/EU. For a very substantial number of Britons, the relationship never remotely involved 'love'. He made little reference, too, to that even the most avid supporters of the EU in the UK have usually strongly qualified their enthusiasm by noting that it is in need of improvement. This was particularly evident during the 2016 referendum.

Unlike Mardell, Tony Blair, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the EU, acknowledged the extent of these deep reservations in episode 9 of the series. He said:

... at any point in time with Britain's relationship since 1973 with Europe, if you'd held a referendum, it would have been touch and go – whether in Margaret Thatcher's time, my time, or any other time.

The extent of this lack of enthusiasm among British voters is also clearly evidenced in the findings of 37 opinion polls conducted by Ipsos Mori between 1977 and 2014 about attitudes in the UK towards the EU/EEC<sup>17</sup>. The polls show that only an average of 54 per cent supported 'Remain', while an average of 46 per cent – and never below 32 per cent – wanted 'Leave'. But was this the true picture? A factor here is fear of being branded 'racist'.<sup>18</sup> Thus polls before the 2016 referendum showed a similar favourable prediction in support of 'Remain' when the actual result was 52 per cent 'leave' and 48 per cent 'Remain'. Overall, the polling shows that Britain was always strongly divided in its attitudes towards the 'European project' – there was never a relationship that could be called in overall terms 'a love story'.

A further point in this connection is that the main two political parties, Conservative and Labour, have been deeply ambivalent about the relationship with the EEC/EU. In the period from 1960 when joining the EEC was first mooted for at least 25 years, a large faction of the Labour party both in Parliament and the country was bitterly opposed to membership because it was seen as being anti-workers' rights and a capitalist club. As was noted in the programmes, Labour only formally adopted a pre-EU stance because, partly in reaction to perceived attacks on trade unionism by Margaret Thatcher, a socialist President of the Commission, Jacques Delors, persuaded the party that the EEC/EU had become a champion and defender of workers' rights.

The Conservative party, for its part, though initially enthusiastic about the potential economic benefits of the EEC – supporters hence voted strongly to remain in 1975 – always had elements who were worried about the impact on national sovereignty. This was only reflected in the programme by brief archive clips from Enoch Powell, who is now regarded as 'extremist' by

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/european-union-membership-trends>

<sup>18</sup> The 'racist' fear effect is explored here: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/politics/welcome-to-brexite-britain---a-nation-of-secret-leave-voters-too/>

many commentators<sup>19</sup>. As the EEC transformed into the EU these concerns expanded until from the early 1990s onwards, very significant numbers of the Conservative party in Westminster and across the country became either hostile to the project or uncertain.

Thus the only party which remained enthusiastic about 'the EEC/Europe throughout the UK's membership has been the Liberal Democrats and its predecessor, the Liberal Party. To them, perhaps, it was always a positive relationship.

## 2.3 Was this 'News'?

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An unusual feature of this series was that it was broadcast in the World at One, and was thus projected to listeners as current affairs reportage and analysis.

But was it? As had already been noted, a very significant part of the series was the contributions of Mark Mardell, which totalled almost 17,000 words, an average of almost 1,300 per episode. His commentary was thus around 43 per cent of the entire series. Much of what he said was highly skewed.

Of course, broadcast journalists on the BBC and other outlets do increasingly express opinions and judgments about the events they cover, but the scale of this in **Brexit: a Love Story? by Mr Mardell** was striking. The only parallel would be with strongly adversarial news interviews, in which presenters' questions can add up to as much as 50 per cent of the sequence. But *Brexit: a Love Story?* was an edited programme and was not adversarial in tone, so there was no intrinsic need for such a high volume of presenter input. Rather, the space was taken up by his various personal judgments. Mr Mardell's contributions are summarised in section 4 below.

The nature and extent of his comment demonstrates that this was not the objective reporting of a specific event, or related series of events, but rather an opinion-led narrative.

From the outside, of course, it is not possible to work out with certainty how the programme was put together, and in particular how Mr Mardell arrived at his various judgments.

It is likely that stage one of the programme-building process included the pulling together of a basic series/episode structure based the chosen turning points.

Stage two was likely to have involved the preliminary gathering of archive clips from

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<sup>19</sup> Similarly, from the Labour side, Mardell chose an archive clip from Tony Benn to express concerns about the impact of the EEC on national sovereignty. It was thus doubly cast as an issue of concern primarily to those on the far wings of the main political parties.

contributors considered to have made key points about the UK/ 'Europe' relationship, from figures such as Tony Benn and Enoch Powell.

At stage three, it is likely that the programme team decided which special interviews they wanted to conduct. Here, as already noted above, for whatever reason, they chose figures who were mostly on the 'pro' side of the EU/EEC relationship. This was a key determinant of the final programme structure.

At stage four, it looks from the outside – largely because of the skew towards 'pro' figures in the specially-gathered material – that these contributions were carefully-tailored towards the final perspective.

The speaker contributions though taking up most programme space, were actually secondary in importance to the points being made by the presenter about the supposed turning points. Mark Mardell used them to illustrate and amplify his core basic judgments. Included on the anti-EU side were only half a dozen specially-gathered interviews, together with a range of vox pops and archive clips from leading politicians. But they were totally swamped by the scale of the 'pro' contributions.

The negative approach to 'anti' contributors was typified in the handling of the interview of Kelvin MacKenzie in episode 5, 'Up Yours, Delors'. Mr MacKenzie's contributions were pivotal in forming the impression that relations with the EU were poisoned by irresponsible, deliberate anti-Brussels attacks. MacKenzie's alleged gung-ho approach was a major building block in Mr Mardell's overall judgments about press negativity in poisoning the relationship with the EEC/EU. In essence, in his commentary, Mr Mardell substantially blackened the picture by pointing out that Mr MacKenzie's memory of his days as Sun editor were blurred by that he had been intoxicated for much of the time. This observation deliberately conveyed an impression of drunken incompetence. Then, the selected clips from the material gathered from Mr MacKenzie – about making up stories about EU directives concerning pistachio nuts – appeared to be tailored to continue to show him in the worst possible light. If more positive material from the interview was left on the cutting room floor, this was selective editing of the worst kind; if what was presented in the programme was all that he had gathered from Mr MacKenzie, Mr Mardell had been derelict in his duties towards balance. Not all reporting of 'Brussels' in this era was as negative or sensationalist. And if Mr MacKenzie really did want to project himself in such a negative light, Mr Mardell (and the programme editors) should have ensured a more balanced picture of how newspapers covered EU/EEC issues by speaking to other figures involved.

The following examples illustrate further evidence of the fundamentally biased nature of Mark Mardell's approach:

- In episodes three and four, the major focus of Mr Mardell's was towards establishing that

Margaret Thatcher – although initially and remaining a supporter of the EEC throughout her time as Prime Minister – was nevertheless mainly responsible, through her love of conflict, for generating anti-‘Europe’ opinions in Britain. Mardell also worked, in his own commentary and the use of the edited interview items, to establish that her developing dislike of the direction of travel of Brussels was based on anti-German prejudice. He used the comments of Caroline Slocock about these alleged prejudices as primary line of evidence to support his theory. Did everyone in her circle think the same way?

- As noted above, the whole of episode 5 was devoted to building the impression that the British press – doing the bidding of their press baron masters - further poisoned the well against ‘Europe’ by making up lies and half truths about how Brussels operated. The main villains of the piece, according to Mardell, as already noted, were Sun editor Kelvin MacKenzie and also Boris Johnson, whom, it was stressed deliberately made up anti-Brussels stories on the basis that the more preposterous they were, the better. A series of interviews were gathered to attack this approach, and to comment on how irresponsible it was. But did everyone in the then Fleet Street universe operate on such a polarised, irresponsible basis, as Mr Mardell projected?
- Mr Mardell also worked to convey in his commentary and the specially gathered interviews, that the battles over the Maastricht Treaty were created by a small faction of ‘political obsessives’ in the Conservative party, and did not tug at the heartstrings of voters. His core theory was substantiated primarily by the inclusion of a quote from Edwina Currie, who alleged that only 26 dissident MPs had been responsible for the rebellions, and that the remainder, like herself, supported both Maastricht and the EU project. Was this actually the case – and did not John Major’s battles suggest that for a broad variety of reasons, including the intensified drive towards ‘closer integration’, Euroscepticism was a developing force in Parliament and in the country (as evidenced by Ipsos Mori polling)? A tiny glimpse of such attitudes was provided in a quote from John Redwood, but the overall thrust of the commentary and the edited contributions suggested otherwise.
- Another core theory developed by Mr Mardell was that John Major was panicked or bullied by billionaire James Goldsmith – defended by his wife but said by other key contributors, including specially-gathered interviews with Max Hastings and David Mellor, to be ‘odious’ and ‘repellent’ – into conceding the need for a referendum to resolve the ‘Tory civil war’ about the EU.

Overall, therefore, Brexit: a Love Story? was not recognisably ‘news’ and nor should it have been broadcast in a news context. Rather, it was a series of huge subjective judgments by Mr Mardell. The full range of his prejudice is shown in section 4.

# PART 3: SUMMARIES

## 3.1 Summary of anti-EU/EEC points made by contributors

This section illustrates above all just how limited the 'pro' contributions were. As already noted above, the majority were archive clips, tightly edited to deliver in microcosm some of the key arguments against the EU/EEC.

### **Episode 1**

Douglas Jay, Enoch Powell and the MP Neil Martin said between them that the economic consequence of joining the EEC would be disastrous, that it would lead to more government and that the project was an escalator leading to the United States of Europe.

### **Episode 2**

Tony Benn said that he had become aware that unelected European commissioners had more power than he did and was 'accountable to no-one. He felt almost 'like a slave to Rome'. Lord Judd said that as an 'old-fashioned internationalist, he felt the EEC was too restrictive and was about 'greater nationalism'. Enoch Powell commented that the referendum result in 1975 showed that the British people had not yet seen the negative implications of being the EEC in terms of self-government and taxation.

### **Episode 3**

Enoch Powell predicted that increasing national self-confidence after the Falklands conflict would lead to Britons wanting to come out of the EEC. Margaret Thatcher explained that her battle to secure a rebate in the UK's contribution to the EU budget was necessary. Rowan Atkinson made a joke that the EEC was bleeding the UK until it died of anaemia.

### **Episode 4**

There were no anti-EU speakers.

### **Episode 5**

Kelvin MacKenzie explained how he had attacked the EEC over food regulations, then said that Rupert Murdoch was hostile to collective decision-making of the sort made by the EEC. He had agreed with Murdoch that a 'bucket of sh\*\* should be poured all over Europe', and had attacked Jacques Delors because of his pro-EEC outlook. MacKenzie also opined that politicians had never

taken notice of the Sun's views on Europe but had been forced to do so with Nigel Farage. Boris Johnson said he took pot shots at Brussels whenever he could and chucked 'rocks over the wall'.

### **Episode 6**

John Redwood said at the time of Maastricht, he was happy with the rebellion against the treaty, and that resigning over it had been an easy decision. He related how he had responded to the Major 'bastards' claim by saying his parents were married when he was born. Redwood argued that for the first time in this period, it became possible to argue that the EEC was not just a Common Market, it was not what people had voted for in 1975, but something 'far huger' in scope. He (and Eurosceptics) believed it was vital to have that big open debate about whether the British public welcomed this major change in the direction of the EU. Peter Lilley said that when John Major had asked everyone in Cabinet to list good and bad things about Maastricht, his department had come up with nothing in the treaty that people wanted. John Gray, the philosopher, said there was not trust in the democratic credentials of the 'emerging European superstate' and it was seen as a steamroller against national interests.

### **Episode 7**

Stephen Dorrell, the former health secretary, said only that he agreed with the chief medical officer's assessment that BSE could not be spread to a man by beasts. Malcolm Rifkind confirmed that the government was trying to overturn the EU's ban on beef exports.

### **Episode 8**

James Goldsmith claimed that after the 1997 general election, all the parties had become referendum parties. Lord Monckton said James Goldsmith had been very professional in his creation of the Referendum party and was determined to make sure that the UK did not concede more to Brussels. It became the most successful party never to win a seat because it left the door open towards the UK leaving. Priti Patel said Sir James had charisma and conviction and that the result achieved by the Referendum party was 'tremendous'.

### **Episode 9**

Gisela Stuart observed that Tony Blair had tried to define his own relationships with the EU 'but could not' and tried to change the way the EU operated but, of course, that could not be achieved. Jeremy Corbyn claimed that robust opposition to the single currency was required because it would lead in Britain to high unemployment and cuts in public spending.

### **Episode 10**

There were 199 words of vox pops from seven contributors opposed to immigration. Points made included that people were 'pig sick'; that the area had been swamped; that all immigration

should be stopped, including that from the EU; that those who could not afford to move away from immigrant areas felt threatened; that a blind eye was being turned to the issues involved because it did not affect politicians; and that immigration was creating problems with planning, housing, rules and regulations, language barriers and the British way of life. Michael Howard argued that in 2004, other countries opting for transitional arrangements to block free movement meant that the only country they could come to was the UK.

### **Episode 11**

Nigel Farage contributed but made no substantive points about the EU. His press officer, Alex Phillips, said that the EU was incapable of change except at a glacial pace and so when David Cameron pledged post-Bloomberg to make a real change, it was 'doomed to fail'. She claimed that Cameron promising a referendum meant that he was dancing to UKIP's tune and enabled the media to start talking about the EU, and reporting on Euroscepticism, which they hadn't before. Daniel Hannan said that Nigel Farage had done an extraordinary job in creating a party out of nothing. He claimed that David Cameron dropping a Lisbon treaty referendum had been a huge mistake because it paved the way for the in/out referendum. He added that in the 2014 local elections, he (Hannan) had proposed a pact with UKIP. Mark Reckless claimed that after he and Douglas Carswell defected to UKIP, the party moved upmarket, and he suggested that Nigel Farage had played an important role in bringing in to vote people affected by immigration who had not voted before.

### **Episode 12**

Theresa Villiers, the former Northern Ireland Secretary, said she had not declared her support of 'out' to David Cameron until after the outcome of his EU negotiations had been known, but then felt obliged to do so. She added that in previous referendums, the status quo sides had portrayed those wanting change as extremists but this was not possible in 2016 because of the stature of the figures supporting Leave. Daniel Hannan said the government had viewed Eurosceptics as not very bright and thought they could pull the wool over their eyes about the negotiations. Their stance had pushed voters away from the EU because they thought they were being disdained and treated contemptuously. They saw that the EU was 'incapable of reform'. The EU's intransigence had pushed Boris Johnson towards remain.

### **Episode 13**

Michael Howard first said he believed that the EU could have become a much more flexible operation. He said he had voted to stay in the EEC in 1975 because it had been a very different organisation and did not then seem a threat to the nation state. He added that everyone in mainland Europe had a different experience in the Second World War from Britain, which looked back and saw it as the country's finest hour. He argued (in response to Mark Mardell's

point about Euroscepticism poisoning the Conservative party) that it had become (by the 1990s) increasingly difficult to argue that the EU was not a threat to the nation state - something the Conservative party had always championed.

## 3.2 Summary of 'Pro' EU/EEC points made by contributors

The section illustrates the range and depth of the 'pro' perspectives represented in the programme.

### **Episode 1**

Lord Armstrong explained the progress towards agreement between Heath and Pompidou with no mention of the potential divisiveness involved. He later added, after the brief Neil Martin quote in section 3:1 about the EEC moving towards further integration, that the idea of the erosion of parliamentary sovereignty was not discussed in the joining process because the EEC was primarily an economic project. He added that Edward Heath envisaged a community of only nine countries, not the 28 it became, and had not begun to think about the euro, or a European Central Bank. He added:

But he would have said that sovereignty by itself isn't anything, it's what you make of it.

Lord Armstrong said that after Heath had won the vote to join the EEC by 112 votes, he had gone to many celebratory parties, but had first played in Downing Street the First of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues and this had said something about how he had felt about being 'back in Europe' and was very moved. Lord Armstrong added that he, too, was – and was still – very moved (by the music). Mark Mardell asked what the piece of music meant. He replied:

It's very . . . orderly. It's very beautiful, it's very . . . plain and clear. For him that music had meant, for many years, a very great deal, and I think it was part of his sense that we should be back in the centre of things in Europe.

Lord Armstrong added that Heath believed the political and intellectual arguments for going in were 'overwhelmingly strong'.

Sarah Morrison stressed that Heath believed that the EEC project was about peace and ensuring no more war. She related that Edward Heath had said she should understand what 'Europe' was about because her father and grandfather had been killed in the two world wars. She later explained she had told Heath that at the press conference announcing agreement about joining, he had chosen to wrong chairs and looked like a misshaped egg. Morrison said at the end of charges that Heath had misled the British people about the nature of the EEC:



I look upon that as complete baloney. We'd had the De Gaulle veto, it had been on the agenda, so the idea that he was deceiving is complete nonsense.

Edward Gregson, who Heath commissioned to write a 'stately and triumphant' piece of music to mark the UK's joining of the EEC, said it was exciting for his generation to join, in that it was about becoming 'Europeans'.

## **Episode 2**

Roy Jenkins, in an archive clip, rebutted the idea that the EU was not democratic and asserted that the European commissioners were appointed by various governments of the day, and were then the servants of the Council of Ministers.

Shirley Williams said there was a battle over the EEC in Labour, and claimed that opposition was based on hating 'Europe' and thinking it was a capitalist conspiracy. In archive footage, she said that if the UK came out, the country would be turning on itself, and would show there was no sense of responsibility beyond itself. That would 'break our hearts' as a country. She said (in an interview recorded for the programme):

It was a much more emotional time, people forget that. The Vietnam War had ended a year before, and therefore people's minds were much more tuned to the whole concept of the European Community as having something to do with peace. One of the important things was, for example, the . . . the symbol that was used by the pro-Europe people was a dove of peace.

Mark Mardell observed that to people like Shirley Williams a referendum was an abomination. She said in response that Hitler and Mussolini had wrecked democracy and had done so mainly through referendums. It was their way of excusing and explaining why they had destroyed democracy. She added that Harold Wilson did not like holding a referendum but was persuaded that the party was so split and bitter that it was the only way to keep it together. Once he had decided he then thought about how to win it.

Lord Donoghue said that Harold Wilson believed he had to be above the street-fighting of the referendum, unlike David Cameron. He had made it plain that it was in the country's interests to stay in, but had not campaigned strongly, perhaps partly because Lady Falkender was passionately for leaving and removed campaign dates from his diary. Donoghue said that as the October 1974 general election approached, the referendum was a manifesto promise, so arguments about the EEC were excluded from the campaign. He added that as the referendum approached, he did not 'hate' those who opposed him (such as Benn) because he was very forgiving and settled differences late at night over glasses of beer. Asked what he thought Wilson thought about 'Europe', Donoghue said he was not really of the right or the left, was in some respects as small 'c' conservative and was an internationalist. He had risen to the top via the Tribune ladder, so knew how to speak to the Left. He was also the most tolerant person on

earth. Donoghue said Wilson had 'toned down' his (Donoghue's) draft of his victory speech. Afterwards, he had revealed that he had voted to stay in and had said privately that pulling out of Europe would have put completely the wrong people in power in the UK.

Margaret Thatcher was also quoted:

Conservatives have consistently supported the European idea and they've put that into effect on polling day.

INTERVIEWER: You're claiming this is a success for the Conservative Party?

MT: They couldn't, indeed, have done it without us.

### **Episode 3**

Lord Hannay said in the introductory sequence:

The image of Battling Maggie, trying to get our money back or stop them subsidising agriculture and so on, yeah, that . . . that, that played pretty well, so it was erm . . . a recurrent theme.

He confirmed that Giscard D'Estaing had called her a grocer's daughter and Chirac a 'fishwife'. He added that after the Dublin summit, the whole of the Foreign Office was 'flat on its back' over what Thatcher had done. He said she had thrown a lot of china and damaged bilateral relations with France and Germany by 'shouting a lot'. He later said the relationship with President Mitterand was 'interesting and of mutual respect, and when he had visited, she had fussed about the temperature being right for him. He later confirmed that the relationship between Thatcher and Delors was 'difficult' and outlined that at a press conference in which she had forgotten Delors was sitting next to her and ignored him throughout. She had behaved 'really quite badly', with the result that Delors was furious.

Sean Hardie, scriptwriter for *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, commented that Thatcher had become and 'aggressive English nationalist in her stance against the EU, it had been quite peripheral to the divisions in British politics (created by Thatcher) until then.

### **Episode 4**

Caroline Slocock, former Thatcher private secretary, said:

You know, in a way it's a kind of love story, but it's a love story that went wrong, you know. Getting at each other's throats, and finally the knife in the back. And, of course, the Conservative party has never properly healed since, I think John Major referred to those 'bastards', famously. And I'd say that those bastards are arguably still around.

She said of Thatcher's attitudes towards Germany were that these were the people who had sent Jews to the gas chambers and they could not be trusted. She added:

And she instanced, and I thought rather ridiculously, the fact that Germans don't queue as an example of that kind of, you know, weakness. So there were deep emotional roots. But of course, the European project is there to stop this happening again. But I think she was very worried about German reunification.

She added that after Geoffrey Howe's resignation, she felt ganged up upon and bullied, by both him, Nigel Lawson and European leaders. Mark Mardell suggested that this was not how history saw her. She responded that history was written mainly by men. Slocock added that when the time for the resignation had come, she had been in tears - she felt betrayed and angry.

Lord Hannay, said to be the then very pro-'European' UK ambassador to the EU (sic - it was still the EEC), said that Thatcher's speech in Bruges 'blew up in his face'.

Margaret Thatcher quotes from her Bruges speech were:

If you believe some of the things said and written about my views on Europe, it must seem rather like inviting Genghis Khan to speak on the virtues of peaceful coexistence! Britain does not dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community.

And later:

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.

Finally:

To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve. Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality.

Lord Lawson said that an earlier draft of the Bruges speech had been much tougher, and that it was to some extent Lord Powell who had persuaded Thatcher to make the changes. He later said of the plans towards the EU and the euro, that the Foreign office view was that the UK 'must always be in the room'. Over the ERM, he outlined that Geoffrey Howe had threatened to resign if Thatcher did not agree to join. Lawson added that he did not believe Howe would actually do so, and so he had also threatened to resign. He claimed his threat took Thatcher by surprise. Lawson said the atmosphere at Madrid was very awkward and unpleasant. The aim was to 'try get her to move' but she became in response more adamant, and moved only slightly.

Timothy Garton Ash (one of the 'top experts' summoned to Chequers to discuss post-Berlin Wall politics), said Thatcher's mental clock had in some ways stopped in 1940; the Germans were bad, the French defeated, the rest of 'Europe' was defeated and Britain stood alone. He

contended she also felt bullied by Helmut Kohl and had been 'handbagged' by him.

## Episode 5

Kenneth Clarke, described as a 'veteran European enthusiast', said that under the very good editor David English, the Daily Mail had reassured the 'bourgeois British' about the relationship with the EEC, but then the 'ferociously Eurosceptic' Paul Dacre came along and the 'conservative family' was exposed to 'unremitting anti-European propaganda' which was still maintained. He said later that Boris Johnson's journalism drove him up the wall because parts were 'completely invented' (propaganda) and accused him of betraying the national interest. Clarke added that Johnson had an 'incurable habit of speaking' in a 'slightly Trump-like way'. He was a very bright guy but could not stop sometimes fooling around thus creating 'quite a lot of problems'. Clarke said that negative journalism about Brussels had lasted for decades and had a very marked effect on 'right of centre' opinion, especially 'Conservative party activists, particularly as they aged'. He added:

And party leaders didn't usually upset the newspapers by responding to it particularly. Increasingly, as the years went by, pro-European arguments just weren't printed by the right-wing newspapers.

Max Hastings said that he regularly lunched with Douglas Hurd during the late 1980s and he told him he was 'riding a camel' (straddling two positions) in his European coverage, and was dead right - he was trying to make the pro-European case while avoiding a bust up with 'our anti-Europeans' and 'our proprietor'. He said that Conrad Black rang at strange hours - did not go to bed. His wife had urged him to 'think of the money' and put up with it. He added that d he had not realised how much anger there were among right-wingers on the Telegraph's staff about our European position.

In reaction to 'Up Yours Delors!', he said that Rupert Murdoch as an Australian or American could say he had a far better understanding of what the British people felt and wanted than people like me, 'and...he would be right'.

Geoff Meade (PA), said he remembered an occasion when the British press wrongly reported that a food additives directive would ban the manufacture of prawn cocktail crisps, forcing the relevant commissioner to explain he had no intention of doing so. He later suggested that Boris Johnson had made a story up about the Berlaymont being blown up, and was sheepish when he pointed out that would not possibly happen because it had asbestos in it. Meade said that Johnson made the weather (in Brussels) and was a brilliant 'imaginative' guy. But he got some things right, particularly about what 'integrationists' were doing to upset 'the right-wing of the Conservative party'. In answer to a question from Mardell about the extent to which a 'declining newspaper industry' had made a difference to British attitudes to the EU, Meade said that their coverage had been deplorable because an awful lot was simply lies. None had seen in those

days (among journalists) that the result would be Brexit.

Jacki Davies said that every journalist in Brussels had to fight to get newspaper space and stories were hyped. But she denied ever making things up - it was a matter of 'tone'. She said Boris Johnson's 'trick' was to take a story with a grain of truth. He suggested that the Berlaymont would be replaced with something 'higher than the Eiffel Tower'. She had made him read out his own story and the 'killer paragraph' was clearly made up about what EU officials had said. It boiled down that someone had submitted or suggested such an idea, but it had never been seriously considered. Thanks to Johnson, it had still made headlines, even in her own paper - the Daily Mail version had been written by someone in London. They wanted it because it was about eurocrats having delusions of grandeur.

## **Episode 6**

Kenneth Clarke said that, as a compromise, it was agreed that the Cabinet would be in favour of the Maastricht Treaty, but with an opt-out on the single currency and the social chapter, which John Major had then triumphantly negotiated. He had been praised as a result by 'hardline Eurosceptics' such as Teddy Taylor. Clarke claimed that if the Danish referendum (against Maastricht) had not happened 'nobody would have bothered' about the treaty. He asserted:

... let's face it, as you and I sit here now, most of the people who got themselves beside themselves with passions over Maastricht couldn't now quickly remember quite what we were arguing about. And looking back at some of the debates, they were obscure and ridiculous.

Edwina Currie said that the problem with the Maastricht UK agreement was that it suggested that 'we could opt out of everything', creating the impression that the UK was an extremely reluctant member of the EU. She observed that this was in reaction to only 26 rebels in the party who were outnumbered 10:1 by those 'who had been elected on a pro-European stance'. The result was that it felt that the ground was being shifted 'from under our feet'.

She told an anecdote about the passage of Maastricht, which, she said, had included 74 divisions and was like 'dancing on hot coals'. She had been part of the Positive European Group of backbenchers, and John Major had told them he wanted to be at the heart of Europe. Then Teddy Taylor had told her that Major - during a meeting his group - had said he was the 'biggest Eurosceptic in the cabinet'. She said she had decided it would not do.

Currie said that John Major seemed incapable of drawing all the groups in the party together and getting a compromise, and had to plead for support.

There was an archive clip of John Major's off-camera 'bastards' remark.

## Episode 7

Christine Lord explained that her son Andrew had died an agonised death and descended from a fit young man to having a brain punched through with so many holes that he had a death rattle that went on for several days. He had asked her to find out what caused his death.

In the second sequence with her, Lord said her son had started working for a radio station when he was 14 and at 17 became known as the legend of the desk, and was given a permanent job, because he had single-handedly managed its 9/11 coverage. He thus had a wonderful career ahead of him. Mark Mardell explained that Lord was herself a journalist and was aware (in the 1980s) that lots of cows were staggering around and so was alert to the 'dangers of BSE'.

Lord said she approved the continuing beef ban because toxic material was still being fed to children. She declared (in agreement to Mark Mardell's noting of the government campaign):

Yes, because I mean, at the end of the day, it's all been about money and keeping the export trade going and keeping the beef industry going. If, which they should've done, if they'd culled every cow, every heard in the UK – god, the money that would have lost corporations, food corporations, shareholders, the government coffers, and also people were shoring up their own jobs.

MM: But the story became, in some ways, the government's battle with Europe . . .

CL: Yes.

MM: Rather than . . .

CL: Yeah. Well, spin isn't it. Government spin. I mean, really they should have been protecting my son, they should have been protecting your family. I mean, the EU had it bang on.

Sir Richard Packer, permanent secretary at the ministry of agriculture, said John Gummer had given his daughter a burger when it was too hot, and she had burned herself. It had made 'wonderful television', but said 'the stunt' (Mardell's words) was not outlandish because he genuinely believed the beef was safe. Sir Richard said that when the SEAC report had been received, he told the minister 'we are in deep trouble' because young men were dying terrible deaths. He had warned that a terrible time was ahead, and claimed the Major government was not strong enough to handle.

Sir Richard, describing John Major's threats to the EU, said that he had been with the agriculture minister when he received a call from Major about it. Douglas Hogg had argued his approach was unwise.

Sir Richard said Douglas Hogg told the government that it was unlikely that the ban would be

lifted, and he became very unpopular for doing so.

Franz Fischler, then EU Agriculture Commissioner, said the agriculture minister phoned him to say the government was announcing that they now accepted the disease could spread to humans. Later he said that despite pleading from the UK, it was decided that the ban would remain unless a package of measures was agreed by the UK. The agriculture minister had agreed to the demands, but John Major had then vetoed it. He attacked the UK's non co-operation policy, asking what it had brought, despite the support of the 'populist media'.

Stephen Wall, the UK ambassador to the EU, said the response of the government was 'kind of defensive'. The chief veterinary officer had tried and failed at a dinner at Wall's home in Brussels to persuade the European veterinary chiefs to get the ban on beef lifted. The reaction from London was that they were politically motivated, but Wall said their position was that they could not recommend a lifting of the ban. He claimed that if the UK had been in the same position with another country, the UK CVO might also have been cautious.

He said that after the EU decided the ban would continue, he had received a call from John Major saying he was about to lose a Commons vote and was going to impose a policy of non-cooperation. Wall claimed it was a policy of panic that had not been thought through – but it boiled down to that the UK would veto anything that required unanimity.

Wall said that Major's responses were stupid in that he distilled it down to an issue of serving or not serving roast beef, and then arranged to have a dinner for a visiting European. Linda Chalker, the development minister, became the first to exercise the UK's veto and then Michael Howard had, in effect, vetoed his own proposal. Everybody could see that this was thus not very sustainable. He added that Jacques Santerre, president of the Commission, saw that the need was now to construct a ladder for the UK to climb down. He said:

And certainly, one of the problems of dealing with it was because it, you know, it became sort of war on Europe by other means, as it were, as far as the, as far as the sceptics were concerned.

## **Episode 8**

Max Hastings said that Sir James Goldsmith was a completely malign influence in UK politics. He said he had mocked him relentlessly for 'this ridiculous intervention'. Hastings claimed he had been rung by one of Sir James's aides, who had threatened to destroy him. He thus regarded Sir James with absolute contempt because he was behaving like the Mafia.

David Mellor said:

Major could have promised the angels would appear and not on every front door of everyone who was prepared to vote Tory and grant them any wish they wanted, it wasn't

ever going to make any difference. So, the only real significance of John Major's pledge of a referendum is that it perhaps provided a staging post on the long route to catastrophe, finally followed by David Cameron.

He added that in his Putney seat, he had let rip at Sir James because he had only attracted a derisory number of votes and was dead in the water as a party. He had served 18 years there and his constituents deserved to be said goodbye to in a dignified way. He maintained that Sir James was one of the more repellent people he had come across in his career - to the extent that he despised him, largely because he had an impenetrable ego and thought money could buy everything.

Kenneth Clarke said that Michael Heseltine and he had given way over the referendum at one point, but only to cheer John Major up because he was so desperate.

## **Episode 9**

Stephen Wall, the UK's ambassador to the EU, said that when Tony Blair arrived at an informal EU meeting, it was as if Brad Pitt was in town, and everyone lined up to have pictures taken with him. He later said (in relation to the problems between Brown and Blair over the euro) that it was assumed they were talking, but that they weren't - and things became 'pretty heated'. The meetings he actually attended weren't heated, but it was Gordon Brown at his most stubborn and dour. He added:

Tony was the most pro-European Prime Minister we've had in modern times. Yet even he, at times, I think, would have been tempering his sense of pro-Europeanism because he knew that it wasn't always terribly popular here. And there were parts of the European Union that he, that he wasn't terribly keen on.

Alastair Campbell suggested it had been his idea to hold a cycle race at Blair's first summit and it was perhaps inevitable that he would win, given the physical state of the others.

He confirmed that a new approach to Europe had been part of the new Labour brand and the big thing was 'modernisation' - Tony Blair was very, very keen that Europe was part of that agenda. They wanted to get away from the idea that Europe was something 'done to us' and opposed to 'something we could shape'. Campbell revealed that Thatcher had come to see them 'but had such a simplistic view', that you could not trust the French, that the Germans still felt very guilty about the war, the only people who liked the UK were the Dutch - and 'they were too small'.

Tony Blair, in response to Mark Mardell's question about whether he had led in Europe, and whether it was 'high risk' (in case he had fallen off) said the bike ride was obviously a superficial thing, and then that the most high risk thing he'd done was headers with Kevin Keegan. If he had tripped in the bike race 'it would have gone down in legend'.



Blair later added that he had not been passionate about the euro, though he could see that at some point the UK might want to join and so he could see 'we would want to' do so it was important to 'position us' as positive towards it, otherwise 'you were going to be damning what was a central European preoccupation, 'it wouldn't be smart diplomatic politics'. Asked if he wasn't disappointed about not joining in the first wave, he replied:

No, I wasn't, because the advice I got from people who did study the economics was that it's not clear to us that this thing can be made to work in this way if everyone goes in, because, you know, the German economy and the Italian economy are not really in the same state.

Blair said he had a relationship with Gordon Brown – for all the difficulties – in which they could be very frank with each other and iron out problems, or if not 'at least they were on the table'. He added that he had written in the Sun 'I Love the Pound' because it was necessary to show - against claims from the Conservatives - that he was not going to dragoon the country into the euro and that Labour understood the attachment to the pound.

In response to a question from Mark Mardell whether he could have done more to help Britain 'not love the pound but the European Union', Blair replied that the public had always been in two minds about Europe, the scepticism was ingrained. He claimed he had gone out and made the case for 'Europe', and could possibly have done more, but he was not sure whether it would have moved the needle much. He added that what had to be done was to explain that Europe was a necessary part of Britain's place in the modern world. A referendum would always have been touch and go from 1973 to the present. Mardell asked if he was saying that Europe is essentially unlovable by the British, and they would never accept it if asked. He replied:

Brussels is going to be unpopular. Now, that's not to say it shouldn't reform and change, and all the way through my time as Prime Minister I had a message for the country which is to say, we should realise our future lies in Europe, but a message for the European Commission and the European institutions which is to say 'we must change'. I think Europe brings a lot of this upon itself, because it loses sight of what would really rally support for Europe, which is helping deal with the everyday problems in the lives of people. But none of that is to say whatever complaints we have about Brussels and Europe and the way it's run, breaking it up, when you look at the broad sweep of the 21st-century and the rise of new powers and the geopolitics of the world, breaking it up would be a crazy thing to do

David Lea said that support for Jacques Delors was based on the EU's social chapter (followed by a clip from the TUC conference with Jacques Delors saying 'Europe needs you').

## **Episode 10:**

**Tony Blair** said that it was ridiculous to believe that someone without a job in the North of England was prevented from getting a job by someone in the hospitality sector. He then said that Britain as a country had chosen not to crack down on free movement, and had ended up

thinking it was a bad idea when 'it is a great idea'.

He claimed that Thatcher, Major and himself had all supported enlargement of the EU for geopolitical and security reasons, as it was part of guaranteeing the borders to the east and expanding NATO. He said that the vantage of the present it had been a vital step against 'Russian nationalism'.

Blair said that the UK had not imposed transitional arrangements because the economy was booming and the additional workforce was needed. Surveys showed that there was a positive impact on the economy from the new people coming in to the UK. Asked whether

Günter Verheugen (with laughter in his voice), the former enlargement commissioner, said that until 2001 there was resistance to expansion to the East, but then that changed and Britain became his greatest ally in the moves towards change. Asked whether he could have prevented people coming by adopting transitional arrangements, Blair said that - as in Germany - they would have come anyway and instead would have been here illegally.

Blair said that the 2004 decisions on immigration were not a mistake in the context of the time, but that with hindsight, things might have been done differently. He strongly defended free movement as a principle and asserted:

Of course, you've got to be careful about things like undercutting wages, and there's lots of things you can do to stop that. But one of the great things about the creation of Europe is that people are free to move and . . . for example, young people got the opportunity to go and study abroad, people come here and we go there, young people can go and work abroad, I think that's fantastic. And the idea that some person who's unemployed in the North of England is prevented from getting a job by someone coming and working in the hospitality sector in London, I mean, it's just ridiculous. There are better ways of dealing with that problem of . . . alienation, of communities and people, than trying to prevent the free movement of people from the rest of Europe.

David Blunkett, former home secretary, said the debate in the UK about the impact of expansion had not been thorough enough, it was simply assumed it would be a good thing. In response to the idea that the Foreign Office saw expansion as a brake on closer union, said he thought it was true. He added that 40 per cent of those who registered in the first year were here already, which confirmed that if free movement had not been allowed, people would still have come, but would have been in the 'sub-economy'. He had been pleased and it was a good thing that people wanted to register and be legal, they wanted to be here for a long time and were prepared to pay tax and National Insurance.

Blunkett, asked whether the Treasury had welcomed immigration as a factor to lower wages, accepted only that there had been a downward push on wages. He then accepted it was a 'subset' of the argument that had gone on. But he claimed that other factors had caused wage

deflation, too, including de-industrialisation and the global meltdown of 2008. This had added to the 'general resentment' on the decisions taken on the question of immigration. He added that the decisions taken about immigration in 2004 were correct.

Christian Dustmann said that his report into the impact of immigration had assumed at the point of being commissioned that the larger 'European' countries such as Germany would, like the UK, offer free movement from accession onwards. The estimate of those coming to the UK from eastern European countries would on that basis be 13,000 a year. He accepted it had been wrong, but said it should have not been used in political debate after Germany and other countries declared they would not accept free movement.

He added, after Mardell had observed that the debate about immigration was raging:

We shouldn't forget that that was a period during which the UK was growing by, on average, 3% per year, we had decreasing unemployment. On the other hand, we had skill shortages in the NHS, which was expanding quite dramatically. We had skill shortages in London, you couldn't find a builder, you couldn't find a plumber. So relieving those economic shortages by allowing for migration was economically certainly not the wrong decision. Whether it was politically the right decision is something, well, you may have to ask Tony Blair and David Blunkett.

Asked how expansion of the EU had been greeted by member states, Günter Verheugen (with laughter in his voice), the former European enlargement commissioner, said that until 2001 there was resistance to expansion to the East, but then that changed and Britain became his greatest ally in the moves towards change.

## **Episode 11**

James May, a presenter of the Top Gear show, said it could be naughty and annoying against a prevailing prissiness. They had not been radical, just 'slightly naughty'. He added later that he and Jeremy Clarkson were worried that they might be perceived as 'a bit UKIP' and isolationist, but they in reality did not, they travelled a lot, and despite accusations of xenophobia, 'we spend most of our time laughing at Britain'.

David Cameron (archive) said UKIP was a bunch of fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists. There was an extract from his Bloomberg speech in which he promised a referendum, and including his warning that it would be a one-way ticket if the UK left.

Nick Clegg, former Liberal Democrat politician, said:

I find all this (Nigel Farage and UKIP) highly kind of synthetic, but, in an age where cartoon characters almost, from the pinstripe suit of Rees-Mogg to the beer-wielding bonhomie of Nigel Farage, all of that kind of stuff gets, yeah, gets very quickly picked up and amplified as somehow different, even though, actually, in many respects, it's not remotely different at all.

He asserted that after the 2010 election, he and David Cameron had agreed that 'Europe' would not dominate. He commented that David Cameron had been pushed towards promising a referendum on EU membership because he was increasingly rattled by what was going on among his party which amounted to a 'cannibalisation by UKIP'.

Clegg claimed that Cameron had sought his consent to make the promise, but said he had refused to do so.

Clegg said that after the Bloomberg speech that he recalled that Cameron had said he would not 'bang on about Europe' but was now doing so. He had said it was 'unstoppable' pressure from his party that had led to the speech. Clegg confirmed that he had used the phrase 'demented gorilla' to describe Cameron's actions.

He argued that although Nigel Farage was a good 'rabble-rouser', it wasn't because of his political dexterity that there was a sea-change in attitudes - that stemmed from the financial crash in 2008.

## **Episode 12**

Craig Olliver said that after the 2015 election, Cameron could not have gone back on his referendum promise without triggering a leadership election and being booted out. He described concerns about the EU as a 'virus' that had taken over the Conservative party - and so the goal was to get the 'boulder' out of the way pretty early on. He added that Mark Rutte, the Dutch Prime Minister, told David Cameron at Davos in January 2016 that the British people would realise what was good for them (and vote to stay in the EU).

Later he described a visit to Cameron by Angela Merkel in which she had told him that the EU would not make any further concessions on immigration. Oliver said he knew the 'right-wing' press would give this a raspberry - and he then knew that the focus had to shift to the referendum itself.

He said that David Cameron had been upset because he believed that Boris Johnson and Michael Gove had written a long piece for the Sunday Times in which they accused him of deliberately lying to people over immigration.

Nick Clegg said the EU had been at a loss why they should go the extra mile to give Conservative backbenchers 'red meat' when they were constantly told that Cameron would win the referendum. That is why he ended up with 'thin gruel'.

Reflecting on the aftermath of the referendum, Clegg said countless voters wondered why the it had been called. They thought there were other far more important things and knew it was about 'spats in the Conservative party'. He argued:

This is the great odd thing about this, that the referendum, which is a vote by the people was, in a sense, put into the hands of the people because the politicians couldn't settle this argument amongst themselves. And that's why so many voters thought, 'Well, sod you, in that case we're just going to vote against the status quo as we see it.'

Another aide, Kate Fall, said he would not have called the referendum had he not thought he would win it. She agreed with Mardell that the election win in 2015 had come as a surprise to Cameron. Afterwards, they were mindful of the need to get the timing of the referendum right and wanted to do other things before becoming totally embroiled in Europe. She said David Cameron had been 'disappointed' and 'possibly hurt' when Michael Gove (a social friend) had said he would campaign to leave.

She said that after the referendum result, no-one had tried to persuade David Cameron not to resign because they had previously been through the 'Leave' scenarios and there was no way he could stay after the vote came in.

Lord Hill said 'the Europeans' found it inconceivable that the UK would vote to leave the EU and didn't believe David Cameron's fears. He added later that 'we' (the government?) allowed people to set the bar for renegotiation incredibly high - including fundamental reform of freedom of movement - when the EU was never going to allow that to happen.

He described the scene at the meeting when it had become clear that Boris Johnson would support Leave. His main point was that Johnson had thought very hard about the decision to the wire and had made it despite also believing that the leave side would never win. He said that after the referendum result had come through Cameron knew he had to resign because he was 'the figurehead of the European system'.

Oliver Letwin also confirmed that he had spoken to Boris Johnson at the behest of the government, but said his impression that by then, his mind was made up. He later confirmed that he believed the result had happened because the issues involved were very complex and did not resolve on party lines.

### **Episode 13**

Lord Hannay said if the UK had joined the EEC at its inception, better deals would have been secured for fisheries and agriculture. Britain had missed an opportunity. British Prime Ministers had said good things about the EEC while they were abroad, but the British public were unaware.

Shirley Williams (from an earlier episode) said those who had negotiated British entry had personal memories of the excesses of Mussolini and Hitler.

A clip from Margaret Thatcher (also used in an earlier episode) said that she believed Britain had a future in Europe. A second clip was that Europe would be stronger if countries kept their

national identities and customs. It would be folly to create an identikit European personality.

Lord Hill said that for other European countries, the EEC/EU felt like something was being given to them, but for the UK, the impression was that something was being taken away. The creation of the euro had set Britain on a mistrustful path because Britain was excluded from economic discussions and a feeling developed 'they' were trying to get 'us' on key economic interests. He added that people thought Brussels as faceless, but it was actually an emotional and sentimental place - Britain voting to leave was a time of real sadness.

Sir Ivan Rogers said that although Britain was 'maritime and global' (referring to de Gaulle's concerns about British membership of the EEC) it was always also a central player on the European continent with central interests there. He added that outside monetary union and open borders, Britain had created a 'pick and choose' membership - the issue for Brussels was how far that should go and how 'more special' Britain should be allowed to become.

Tony Blair said tensions over the role of nationalism conflicted with the organisations of cooperation such as the EU. The British public had always been in two minds about the EEC/EU, and a referendum at any point after 1973 would have been touch and go.

Lord Powell said Britain could have stayed in the EU if it had negotiated more opt-outs 'and so on'. He said there was always doubt in the UK about whether the EU was the best way of securing peace in Europe.

# PART 4: MARK MARDELL ANALYSIS

Part 2 outlined examples of the bias in the programme editing. What follows is the extraction in summary form of the key commentary points in each episode.

## Episode 1

Mark Mardell said that for Edward Heath joining was a 'glorious triumph', a climax of a lifelong desire. He had no doubts that Britain's destiny lay within the EEC. He explained that Heath had become pro-Europe when as a student he had visited the Nuremberg rallies and had met Hitler's henchmen and had thus opposed appeasement. He summarised the steps to joining as follows:

After the war, Europe tried to pull together, to the alarm of many British politicians who attempted to thwart the project for years, before those in government reluctantly, hesitantly, decided there was no alternative, they'd simply have to join. Only to find De Gaulle blocking the road. The leader of the free French in the war, the president himself was no fan of the project, except with France as its master. To the British joining, he said 'non', not once but twice.

He explained that when Georges Pompidou took office, he was more accommodating to the UK joining. Mark Mardell said the other backdrop was the decline in confidence of the UK, and the 'collapse' in the UK's economy. In response to Lord Armstrong's point about sovereignty, Mardell said:

And while these big issues were debated intensely, there was a bigger issue as the backdrop. The country was no longer the self-confident, proud master of Empire, we were the sick man of Europe, beset by economic woes. After all, there were a million unemployed, big iconic companies were going bust, there was a pay-freeze and a wave of strikes. And, from a distance at least, Europe feels like a debate within the elite, not the burning concern on the streets. And it seemed that debate had come to an end, the conclusion. At least it seemed so. In fact, it was only just starting. But a critical date in the calendar of our story was October 28, 1971. The father of the European project, Jean Monet, sat watching in the gallery of the House of Commons as the British Parliament voted to join the six. The fractious debate breached party lines, some Tories defied Heath and it was pro-market Labour rebels who gave the Prime Minister his big majority, bigger than expected, 112. He said, 'Millions around the world would rejoice', and left the chamber to cheers.

Mardell suggested - after Lord Armstrong had explained why Heath believed it was so important to join the EEC - that the big 'historical charge' against Heath was that he had misled the British people, downplayed the loss of sovereignty and spoke of the EEC as an economic project when it was profoundly political. He asked if this was fair, paving the way for a response from Sarah Morrison, who said the idea that he was deceiving anyone was 'complete baloney'.

**Observations:** Mr Mardell concentrated from the outset on comments from those who favoured joining for reasons of peace and economic well-being. He included in archive clips concerns about the EEC's impact on sovereignty, but his main analysis and emphasis was that because of the UK's desperate economic plight, joining was seen to be essential, and that worries about British sovereignty were unfounded.

## **Episode 2**

Mark Mardell said in the introduction that Britain's first ever nationwide referendum had 'cabinet ministers at each other's throats'. He added that after two years of being in the EEC, it seemed that Britain was not in love with it. On the referendum's outcome hung the fate of the Prime Minister and the relationship with 'Europe. Verbal dust-ups between ministers had enlivened a lacklustre campaign. He added, after a contribution from Shirley Williams to the effect that the EEC was about peace, that it seemed like the voters played a bit part in 'someone else's drama'.

There were very short vox pops from voters claiming the EEC was not helping with debt and doing no good. Mardell commented that Lord Judd had wanted to leave for a 'more high-minded reason', in pursuit of internationalism. He added to the frustration of his aides (such as Lord Donoghue) Harold Wilson had kept his distance. He then asserted:

The left's opposition was a curious brew: a pinch of old-fashioned nationalism, a huge dollop of hostility towards this new capitalist club. And then the spice of enthusiasm for the multi-racial, world-spanning Commonwealth. Wilson himself was worried about betraying kinsmen for a problematic and marginal advantage in selling washing machines in Dusseldorf, as he sniffily put it. In 1971, a special party conference voted against joining. But then it happened, we joined, and suddenly Harold Wilson was leading a fractured party towards a general election, with tensions at boiling point.

Mardell said that 'Wedgy' (Tony Benn) was becoming more and more hostile to the EEC and he had argued that voters should have a say on the matter. This, said Mardell, was seen as hair-brained and provocative. It was dismissed initially by Wilson, but then taken up, and to figures such as the older colleague of Shirley Williams who remembered the war because referendums were seen as the process through which Hitler and Mussolini had ruled.

Mardell opined that Wilson was a complex, high achieving man, and despite the objections saw the possibilities of officially letting his colleagues 'the latitude they were already taking'. Wilson had gone into the autumn 1974 election promising not only a referendum but also a renegotiations of the EEC membership terms. He added that 1974 had been tumultuous, with IRA bombings and the three-day week 'so the referendum had to be held'. There followed a sequence in which Mardell explored whether Wilson had 'got cross' with those who opposed his desire to stay in the EEC. There was opinion from Lord Judd and Lord Donoghue that he had



been very easy-going and forgiving, 'the most tolerant person on earth'. Mardell said he had kept personal distance and floated above dangerous affray', then had toned down a victory speech. Mardell commented that the 'referendum device' had perhaps not worked in the end because some on the 'Labour right' had split away six years later, but overall, his approach raised the question of whether he had been 'cleverer than David Cameron, or simply luckier'. He noted that Margaret Thatcher had professed herself thrilled by the result. She had not, however, remained so for long.

**Observations:** Mr Mardell's main thrust in this episode was to establish that the EEC referendum of 1975 was won by Harold Wilson because of his brilliance in handling the politics involved and because membership was supported by Margaret Thatcher. He included in archive material the concerns of figures such as Tony Benn and the Labour Left, but most dominant was the weight he gave to the moderating influence of Harold Wilson and the need for pragmatism. The episode was also structured so that Mr Mardell could compare Wilson's adroit handling of a referendum in 1975 with the serious alleged 'miscalculations' of David Cameron in 2016.

### **Episode 3**

Mark Mardell said in the opening that it was a time of conflict with one voice rising above the rest - Margaret Thatcher, and there was a quote from her in which she explained her demand for a rebate for the UK from the EEC and maintained that the UK and Germany could not pay for everyone else. Mardell said that these were the years when 'Europe' became a battleground and a joke, and when 'many in Britain were taught to see the European Community as an enemy to be vanquished'. He said Thatcher had been thrilled in 1975 to stay in the EEC, but as Prime Minister had fought to cut the amount paid by Britain 'and that changed the British political debate for a generation'. It raised the question of whether the UK's relationship with 'Europe' ever amorous 'or a lukewarm marriage of convenience'. He then focused on the Dublin summit of 1979. Mardell, in explaining Thatcher's anger towards the EU, said that she argued that 70 per cent of the UK budget was spent on the CAP 'which didn't benefit Britain very much' and she calculated the contribution would go up to £1 billion, 'much more than the others'. He added that her 'indignation' was 'honed to an edge' by the attitudes of the men around the table, with the then Irish PM saying she was 'adamant, persistent and repetitive', and the French PM saying she was a 'grocer's daughter'. He said:

The marriage of convenience had turned sour – this row was the relationship, a permanent storm at its centre, dragging on for five long years. This was a crisis, calculated, carefully coordinated crisis.

After mentioning Lord Armstrong's role as cabinet secretary, he said he had noted in a secret memo that she might have to precipitate a crisis, by putting the UK's membership at risk, but at

the same time although she was seen as 'difficult', European leaders thought she was committed to Europe in ways her predecessors were not.

Mardell said that the 1984 EEC summit was in Fontainebleau, chosen perhaps because its grandness was intimidating, but claimed this did not affect Thatcher - she was emboldened by success in the Falklands war and the miners' strike and was just as repetitive, adamant and difficult. The Greek prime minister had suggested it would be a relief if Britain left. Mardell added:

But this was a different Britain, perhaps a different Mrs Thatcher, wreathed in the victory of the Falklands war, battling the miners, vanquished Tory wets at her feet, fallen beneath her headlong charge. Mistress of a more self-confident nation. Bitterly divided, yes, but used to a Prime Minister who seemed to relish conflict over consensus.

Mardell said at Fontainebleau she had jotted down 'impatient bullet points', and had crossly remarked on the cost of the hotel. After the sequence in which it was noted that Thatcher had accepted a reduction of 66 percent, a compromise with President Mitterand, his advisor later wrote that she had 'broken like glass, on the edge of tears' because she wanted a settlement. Mardell noted (and confirmed with Lord Armstrong) that she was quite good at using 'all the techniques', including tears. He added that the relationship with Mitterand became 'rather special, and he had said she had the mouth of Marilyn Monroe and the eyes of Caligula.

He said of Fontainebleau:

Because of personality, style and circumstance, Mrs Thatcher had established in the minds of politicians and public Europe as a place where you do battle, where dragons are slayed and famous victories won against the odds. But this, remember, had been a battle about the bill, not about Britain's place in Europe, about the cost of membership, not the course of history. So perhaps it wasn't so odd that her next move was enthusiastic endorsement of a decisive step forward towards a more integrated Europe – the Single Market.

Then that the single market (which she came to support) was behind 'all those harmonisations' and 'other supposed rules from Brussels', and then had entered Jacques Delors, 'the French socialist President of the Commission, with a mission to forge 'a real European Union' through increased integration.

Mardell concluded:

The stage was set for something new: the Prime Minister's most explicit rejection yet of the direction the European Union was taking. But it wasn't yet, wasn't ever a rejection of membership itself, as Prime Minister 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie', did not want 'out, out, out'. Mrs Thatcher stood on the verge of a full-throated rejection of the way Europe was going, but she also stood on rapidly shifting ground. France was about to be replaced by the spectre of a united Germany as her main foe. And very soon these battles abroad would lead to fatal fractures at home, which would haunt the Conservative party for a

generation. All this and the role shepherd's pie played in that critical speech – Mrs Thatcher as heroine of the Eurosceptic resistance battling her own cabinet to the end next time on 'Brexit: A Love Story?'

**Observations:** Mr Mardell's main thrust was revealed from the outset: that this was the period when Britons 'were taught' – by Margaret Thatcher primarily - to see 'Europe' as a joke and the EEC as 'an enemy to be vanquished'. Thatcher, he contended had achieved this because she preferred to 'relish conflict over consensus' and had created a 'permanent storm' in the UK's EEC relationships. He claimed that despite her antagonism, Mrs Thatcher seemed until her Bruges speech to be committed to EEC membership. The 'pro' EEC specially-gathered contributions were edited to show her basic pro-EEC stance at this time, her love of conflict and that the trigger to the Bruges speech was the 'socialism' of Jacques Delors.

#### **Episode 4**

**Mark Mardell** opened by saying Margaret Thatcher had fallen as a 'new Europe' was being born. He claimed that the fall of the Berlin Wall raised a promise for some, but for her was 'a spectre' - of a united Germany leading a Europe bound for ever closer union 'with even a currency of its own'. She had responded (expressed in an archive extract), 'no, no, no'. He added:

The fight with Europe became a fight over Europe at home. In her own cabinet, her own party, and a fatal one at that.

He added that by 1989, Mrs Thatcher could bask in battles won, but it was not her style and the European Commission had ambitions she could not abide.

Mardell, referring to her Bruges speech, said that it was important in its 'militancy' - the first time the UK had told the masters of EU project 'so far and no further'. He added:

It was not, not yet, 'in or out', but the struggle had begun, between Mrs Thatcher's full-blooded resistance to further integration and the view of others in the Cabinet that more Europe had to be wittingly accepted in the national interest. The tug of war which would define British politics for the next generation began here. It all blew up as some European leaders were devising the biggest, boldest idea yet to drive further European integration: baby steps towards what became the euro – one money for the whole of the European Economic Community. In the jargon of the time, the project for a single currency was known as Economic and Monetary Union. The Chancellor wasn't keen. But Nigel Lawson recognised the argument of colleagues that Britain didn't want to be stuck on the outside of this grand undertaking peering in.

He then explained that the proposed steps towards the euro were clothed in jargon and the arguments involved became almost theological. The key issue emerged as whether the UK should

join the ERM, with Lawson and Geoffrey Howe in favour, and Thatcher against.

Mardell said the possibility of Lawson and Howe resigning over the ERM was a threat of political assassination (which Thatcher was unlikely to survive), and said that Lord Powell believed it had a 'huge impact'. Mardell suggested that at the Madrid summit, there were two hostile(UK) camps.

Mardell said that 'just four months' after the Madrid summit, Lawson did resign. The Iron Lady's armour thus began to crack at a time when the Berlin Wall was also coming down. She had, of course, welcomed the development, and there was an archive clip of her noting the joy on people's faces.

Mardell argued that Thatcher, however, was not happy at the prospect of a united Germany, that she felt 'no joy' and what a new Europe might look like, and resisted what 'some saw' as the 'tide of history'. He added:

There was already a hint of what would be a very British enthusiasm, which would carry the seeds of Brexit to these shores. But for now her worry was a new Germany at the heart of a new Europe, and politicians with ambitions to unite more than just their own country. Mrs Thatcher was intensely suspicious and summoned some top academic experts to Chequers.

He said Charles Powell's memo of the Chequers meeting read like a 'master-class for those who humbly served politicians' with him gently guiding her away from her views of Germany, including aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying and inferiority complex.

Mardell said that some of her senior ministers believed her attitude was stuck in the past, and that led them to believing they would have to drag her down the new road, or 'drag her down'. John Major, who had replaced Nigel Lawson, was in a powerful position and persuaded her to join the ERM. But her 'no, no, no' response had come to a further suggestion against talk of a United States of Europe and a proposal to give the European Parliament more power. It was her attitude, too, towards the single currency. Mardell said that Geoffrey Howe's resignation letter had warned against foot-dragging on the project and claimed the risk of not backing the euro would be 'severe', as well as that Thatcher's stance was undermining British influence in 'Europe'.

He said that at the Paris summit, after the vote had gone against her, Thatcher had put a brave face on it.

Mardell concluded:

Hers would be the first big scalp claimed by the row over Europe, it wouldn't be the last. The Tory civil war began here, Mrs Thatcher drew the battle-lines, stuck the standard in the ground, around which the ranks of future rebels would rally. During the 80s, Mrs Thatcher had changed

the way Britain saw the European Economic Community. As its other leaders put the project on fast forward, she dug in her heels. A love affair? The Iron Lady increasingly rejected these unwelcome advances, proposing an unwanted union. She may have avoided civil war, but drew the battle-lines, stuck the standard in the ground, around which the ranks of future rebels would rally. *(sic – note that is very similar to the beginning of this section – first he says, ‘civil war began here’, but then ‘avoided civil war’ – seems one was included in error)*. Not next time, but the time after, we’ll be looking at the first angry battle in that civil war, when Mrs Thatcher’s last Chancellor, John Major, was Prime Minister and faced the Maastricht rebels.

**Observations:** Mr Mardell argued primarily that Margaret Thatcher’s opposition to the ERM and the steps towards further integration led to her downfall, and was triggered by her prejudice against a united Germany, which was based on simplistic assumptions about how Germans had behaved in the Second World War. He highlighted that she was increasingly at odds with those in her party who saw the ERM as an attractive proposition, and that her intransigence led first Geoffrey Howe then Nigel Lawson to oppose her.

## Episode 5

Mark Mardell described newspaper output as a 'brutal mingling of fact and opinion' and then contrasted what the Sun said about joining the EEC in 1973 ('Yes for a brighter future together') to 'Up Yours Delors! In 1990. He said the purpose of the episode was to step out of time, looking at the impressions of newspapermen's views of the relationship of the EU with the UK. He said the Sun had not been alone in switching sides between 1975 and 2016; in 1975 it had said that life outside the EEC would mean 'no coffee, wine or beans' until further notice.

He then asked how much the unrelenting scorn (from newspapers) towards the European project created a climate where leaving looked like an attractive option and asked what had changed. (Illogically), he pointed to 1969 when The Sun had been bought by Rupert Murdoch.

He added that with 'cheery vulgarity', Kelvin MacKenzie had been The Sun's editor for 13 years and pointed out that because of his drinking, he admitted his memories were hazy. He included archive clips illustrating that The Sun was frequently reported to the Press Council, then observed that if 'Francophobia' was good fun, 'mocking the EU was good politics'.

He said that by contrast the Telegraph did not have a 'bish, bash bosh' style. One thing the Telegraph and Sun did have in common was foreign bosses 'powerful men who enjoyed their power'. The Telegraph was owned (from 1986) by a Canadian, Conrad Black.

Mardell included a sequence in which the British press had also attacked Germany and Belgium for not joining in the first Gulf War, adding to the anti-European pressure, especially against

the Germans and Belgians for not joining the war coalition, at the time (included a quote from Ian Hislop).

He said that after the war 'dullness crept back in' and it was thus necessary to spare a thought for the journalists covering the 'pivotal Maastricht summit'. He brought in husband and wife team Geoff Meade of PA and Jacki Davies of the Daily Mail. He added that the Daily Telegraph had a secret weapon to 'ginger' the debate - Boris Johnson. He said:

The future Foreign Secretary was producing headlines like, 'Snails are Fish says EU' and 'Threat to British Pink Sausages', and even, 'Brussels Recruits Sniffers to Ensure that Euro-Manure smells the same.'

BJ: Right, ah, this is fantastic, it is The Clash, Pressure Drop.

MM: Pressure Drop indeed – Boris Johnson on Desert Island Discs in 2005. He was, by then, the editor of The Spectator, but looked back on the storms he caused with some relish.

He said of Boris Johnson's journalism:

He saw his role as a troublemaker with a comic turn of phrase, as a congenial one. That has perhaps never changed, but then, he recognised, one hard to maintain in frontline politics.

Mardell said in conclusion:

There's no doubting the power of the press to mould attitudes, create general impressions, but perhaps it wasn't enough on its own to forge political change...In the 90s Mr Farage was still an unknown city trader. We'll come back to his role as possibly the man who turned a far-fetched dream of junking the whole relationship into hard fact. But if Mrs Thatcher had sounded the alarm, identifying Brussels as an encroaching, interfering spectre, the British press kept it ringing in our ears, a constant background noise, establishing her fears as a commonplace truth, creating a climate in congenial for politicians who did have little love left for the European project. Next, will return to a time when that project was getting bigger and bolder, few were talking about walking out, but rebellion was in the air. Resistance to the plan became the very meat and drink of Westminster politics. The idea of another referendum was floated for the first time in 20 years. Europe forced another Prime Minister to resign – for a few days anyway. Major, Maastricht and a bunch of Bastard's, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

**Observations:** These are in Part 2 above and focus the disproportionate demonising of the EEC/EU by the press through the 'brutal mingling of fact and opinion' and 'unrelenting scorn' which led to the posing of the question among readers where 'leaving looked an attractive option'. The specially-gathered materials from journalists who were 'pro' EEC/EU buttressed Mr Mardell's claims.

## Episode 6

In the introduction, Mark Mardell said:

... this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' In this episode, that question is answered by someone with a big, fat negative. Those Conservatives who made their stand, demanding the relationship should not go any further, flinging themselves into a fratricidal fray, against the authority of the Prime Minister, rather than be dragged to the altar of ever closer union.

He explained that Maastricht gave Peter Lilley a dilemma about this being a treaty too far. John Major had by now taken over from Margaret Thatcher and had tried to distance himself from her 'hostile tone', declaring that he wanted to be at the heart of Europe 'not swinging his bat at its box'. But trade and industry secretary Lilley was against another treaty.

He added that Maastricht was a 'big diplomatic deal' which created the EU and the euro as a huge new goal. It also included:

... a common foreign policy, closer police cooperation, it created European citizens and gave them new rights to live and move freely within the EU. John Major fought hard, he won an agreement from the other 11 countries that the UK wouldn't have to take part in the euro or the social chapter – workers' rights and so on.

Mardell added that Edwina Currie saw that as part of the problem. Explaining the impact of the Danish referendum, there were numerous divisions in the House of Commons over the treaty. The French had voted in favour in their referendum, and then the Danes - after some EU concessions - voted again and approved the treaty. Mardell noted (using archive material from a BBC programme) that this was a year in which ordinary people all round Europe 'had cocked a snook at government'.

Mardell said that during the passage of Maastricht the whips had 'the camaraderie of the trenches' and acted as 'chums, psychotherapists and inquisitors'. They told one MP he had a nickname which was a four letter expletive. He added that during these 'polar nights of endless rebellion', something darker intruded - black Wednesday, when the UK was ejected from the ERM, which Major had forced Thatcher to join. Then the following year, 'something more exciting', the rebels defeated the government.

Mardell said that after the vote, Major won a vote of confidence motion, but then seemed 'wounded, diminished, and suffered the slow torment of a death by a thousand cuts'. He said the cruelty weakened him and led to his authority 'leaking away'. It was then that he made his bastards remark to the TV cameras (without realising they were rolling).

Mardell said the continuing rebellion led major to resign in 1995. He said of the decision:

John Major won, but never before had a Prime Minister been forced to resign as party

leader while in office. Never before had the party been so ungovernable. Never before had Europe so divided the party.

There followed a quote from John Major which included a plea not to tie his hands together when he was negotiating. Mardell concluded:

His hands? Major had been tied in knots by this love story gone sour. Perhaps the rebels had put country before party, perhaps they'd displayed a careless lack of discipline after 18 years in power. The poisonous row over our relationship with the European Union had sapped the Conservatives of strength, drained their ability, perhaps even their desire to govern. Europe had already helped bring down the most important post-war Conservative Prime Minister, now it had become radioactive – a row that had the potential to undermine any leader, keep them out of power, destroy any Conservative Prime Minister. Certainly, they had to wait a long time before another one came along, until 2010 when David Cameron became Prime Minister, and perhaps he should have paid more heed to the warnings from the past. But in the 90s Maastricht had been a row inside the ruling party, for political obsessives which plucked few heartstrings among the general population.

**Observations:** The main intent if the episode was to show that in a party tired of governing, a civil war, or 'fratricidal fray' – led by just 26 rebellious MPs – was responsible for growing serious disenchantment over the Maastricht Treaty and the steps towards closer union in the EU. Mr Mardell's summing-up was that 'Maastricht had been a row inside the ruling party for political obsessives which plucked few heartstrings among the general population.' The programme seriously underplayed in its choice of predominantly pro-EU contributors the growing weight of Euroscepticism in Parliament and the country as a whole. Mrs Thatcher herself had expressed the weight of her concerns in a House of Lord speech in 1993 during the passage of the Maastricht Treaty<sup>20</sup>. This was an example the type of evidence which gave lie to Mardell's approach.

## Episode 7

Mark Mardell opened by saying that defending 'potentially diseased' roast beef of old England had led to a new low in the relationship with the EU. He said Mad Cow disease was an ugly name and the government desperately wanted to believe it could not kill people.

He explained that BSE killed cows. In response the government banned beef offal and believed it could not be caught by people. Their message was conveyed by Agriculture minister John Gummer who had enrolled his daughter Cordelia to eat a burger and thereby persuade people it was safe to eat beef.

Mardell said that after the Gummer 'stunt', more and more questions were asked about beef -

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108314>



what was doubted was whether it was safe for humans, culminating in 1996 with the SEAC report which found that 'probably' cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in young adults were due to exposure to BSE.

After the long sequence with Christine Lord about her son being diagnosed (in 2005-6) with the human form of BSE, Mardell jumped back to 1996, and said Douglas Hogg, then agriculture secretary and Stephen Dorrell, health secretary, formed 'an uncomfortable double act' in the Commons.

Mardell said the EU's caution about BSE did not go down well with farmers and there was actuality from the time and in the present about farms coming under threat.

He said the decision by the EU to continue with the beef ban had inflamed the Conservative party. John Major had reacted with anger and had said he would bring EU business to a standstill.

After the sequence with Stephen Wall describing John Major's 'panic reaction', Mardell said that Sir Richard Packer was 'equally appalled'. He added:

But the British press loved it. The Daily Mail celebrated with the headline, 'Major Goes to War at Last' The Daily Express declared, 'We have been here before, and one.' Another paper said simply, 'Major now has balls.'

He said that afterwards, who had previously said England was all about warm beer and old maids ('channelling Orwell'), now told an audience in Spain that beef was part of the English psyche.

After comments from Stephen Wall about a possible initiative for the ban to be lifted from Jacques Santerre, Mardell said the UK hoped for progress, and was confident, but it took another 10 years.

Mark Mardell said that the politicians assumed the Beef War had public backing, but this was not universally true (and then introduced further comments from Christine Lord).

Mardell concluded:

After Mrs Thatcher's battles over the budget, after continual warnings about an ever-encroaching Brussels, after Major's mauling by the Maastricht rebels, the Prime Minister's defiance in the face of European precautions against a terrifying, fatal disease seemed not illogical but almost inevitable.

RP:        Well, this particular thing showed that prime ministers under pressure will cast about for any action which might lessen the tension and placate both sides of the divide.

MM:        A shocking, extraordinary, dramatic tragedy had been recast by Conservative politicians and a delighted press into a much more familiar, comforting narrative: a battle

with Brussels. It seemed no event could survive contact with Europe without being transformed into being all about Europe. As the Tories staggered towards a cull at the general election, the person Mrs Thatcher described as one of the bravest men she'd ever met, burst into British politics, a technical character variously described as a bold, buccaneering billionaire, or a man with the morals of a tomcat, pushing both main parties down a path towards a plebiscite on Europe. Was Sir James Goldsmith the man who changed a nation.

**Observations:** Mark Mardell assembled a programme which set out through one clinical example to establish that BSE had been a major threat to human health and in that context, to underline that the Major government's obdurate defence of British roast beef had been unreasonable and misplaced. His argument was that the dispute over the safety of beef consumption had stoked further unreasonable dislike of the EU because of the ban by Brussels on beef exports.

## Episode 8

Mark Mardell said that Sir James Goldsmith had 'divided but never ruled', and that one critic had said he had the 'instincts of a bookie and the morals of a tomcat'. He added that the 'brash' billionaire had formed a party which failed to win a single seat, but it perhaps mattered a great deal.

He opened the episode by describing Sir James as the son of an independent MP who was in a family of bankers. His first wife – whom he had married when she was 18 – had died tragically when seven months pregnant. He had won a fortune on horses while still at Eton, but was 'asked to leave that incubator of the upper classes' – a class he had felt tried to exclude him because of their snobbery. Mardell added that he had the face of a cherub and was 6 foot five of appetite, for women, money and influence. A daughter had confessed her father would like a harem. He had eight children, three wives and a 'at least one' mistress always on the go. For 10 years his wife was Annabel Birley.

Mardell said that – after Lady Annabel had said he had thrown non-working objects around - one of the things that didn't work for Sir James was the EU, and he had tried to throw it 'right out of the window'. He claimed that first Sir James had to make money and he had done so 'hand over fist' from a very wide range of industrial sectors and top brands. He had been 'a buccaneer of the high seas of finance, sailing close to the wind of propriety, taking no prisoners'. He had sued those who called him a corporate raider, and 'seemed to relish' a 'vicious legal feud with Private Eye', which became like a soap opera. He also craved influence and pursued causes such as environmentalism. In a book, he attacked global trade, the social torment of immigration, nuclear energy, Brussels bureaucracy and the single currency concept. He had formed a French party and became an MEP, and the EU became his 'main obsession'.

Mardell said he had earned the respect of Margaret Thatcher – she called him a warrior for truth when he died - and wooed politicians as relentlessly as he 'chased women'.

Mardell said that his aim came to be to challenge all but the most Eurosceptic MPs. He added that Priti Patel became the party's press officer. He said that if Sir James's aim was to create panic, he succeeded and included a clip from Panorama in which John Major had allegedly asked Sir James to accept that he was not a federalist, but that had only stiffened his resolve because he wanted certainty not promises. He asserted:

The new party geared up to fight the 1997 general election. In some ways, the Referendum Party was the Tory anti-EU right Militant, and in exile. Lord McAlpine, long-time Conservative treasurer, chaired its first conference. Sir James spent three times as much as the Tories on ads in the press. He had a new idea: a twelve-minute videotape, 5 million of them, designed to make voters' flesh creep.

There was a clip from the tape in which the presenter said what viewers would hear would 'outrage you'.

Mardell said that the reason John Major did not give in over the referendum was because of the stance of Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine, the biggest 'pro-European beasts of the Conservative jungle' because they had threatened to resign when major had previously toyed with the idea. He added that when support for a referendum became a stampede by MPs, he had tried again to change party policy. He concluded:

... the promise of a referendum on the single currency or on something else to do with Europe was now part of the political toolkit. And an echo to from a future yet to come. After all, this was a party, a failure by conventional measures of seats in Parliament, changing the very course of British history by pressuring a Prime Minister and his party into a promise. If a referendum was now an inevitable pledge, it was one those in power didn't really relish honouring. And this raises a new question: could that 'good egg', a young, pro-European Prime Minister use his overpowering media-savvy skills and rekindle the romance with the EU, and persuade the British public it was love, actually? Blair, Brown and a bike race – Blair leads in Europe, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story

**Observations:** Mark Mardell set out to show that the first moves towards the adoption of further referendums on the EU had been bludgeoned out if John Major by the efforts of a bullying financier who behaved like a 'bookie' and was thought by some to be 'odious and repellent'. Mr Mardell included counter-claims on behalf of James Goldsmith that he was an effective campaigner and a caring husband, but the weight of the was to show that moves towards a referendum had been bludgeoned out of a reluctant and incompetent Prime Minister who had no choice. The programme did not include any discussion of what James Goldsmith's objections to the EU were, nor of the extent of the rising tide of general anti-EU opinion.

## Episode 9

Mark Mardell noted in his key opening sequence:

... could an enthusiastically pro-European Prime Minister convert this soured marriage of convenience into something nearer a love match? Or was that doomed from the start? Katrina and the Waves's euphoric Eurovision winner perhaps captured the sense that this was a fresh start, a chance to shine a new light on the relationship with European project. Was the UK no longer a grouchy outsider singing the same old tune, but a winner, leader in Europe? That's the image Blair wanted to project.

Mardell explained how at his first EU summit, there had been an impromptu cycle race between leaders, and a BBC reporter conveyed that it was obvious that Tony Blair would win. Mardell noted that it led to headlines such as 'Blair leads in Europe'. He asked if this was actually the case. Mardell then noted that Labour has signed up to the Maastricht social chapter 'but was still part of the awkward squad'.

There was a news-clip saying that the UK and other countries were opposed to giving the EU a military role.

He commented that Mrs Thatcher had played 'a much bigger role' (than was accepted) in shaping Labour's attitude to Europe. Labour had been riven by the 1975 referendum, but her dislike of Jacques Delors and his championship of workers' rights made him an attractive figure 'for Labour and the unions'. David Lea, then assistant general secretary of the TUC, had got him invited to the TUC conference. There was a clip from the then general secretary Ron Todd noting that in response, the delegates had started singing 'forever Jacques'. Mardell said he distinctively remembered Todd saying that Brussels was the only game in town. He said he had been impressed by that 'sitting in the audience'. He added:

It was a long march, but hostility towards the European capitalist club changed slowly, gradually under Neil Kinnock to the enthusiasm for the protection of workers' rights under such rules. For most Labour members, anyway, the hard left never changed. But they were almost irrelevant, just a few rebels, like Jeremy Corbyn.

He then said:

Part of the problem of selling Europe was that it was an ever-evolving, ever-shifting thing, always towards ever-greater union, always with a new project in its sights. By the time Blair was in Number Ten, the waves were growing choppy – the single currency wasn't just a promise in a treaty, but a looming reality, with coins being designed, the Central Bank in place. It was nearly make your mind up time for Britain. And Brown. And Blair.

Mardell introduced Charlie Whelan as Gordon Brown's 'assertive, sometimes abrasive press officer. Commenting about the Blair-Brown tension over the EU, he suggested it was 'history repeating itself' - like Thatcher and Lawson they fought, with the roots of their problem how Blair came to be leader, and Europe became their battleground.

He then included comment (from Charlie Whelan and Robert Blevin, a Liberal democrat researcher at the time) which suggested that soon after the 1997 election, news of Gordon Brown's opposition to the UK joining the euro for the lifetime of the Parliament emerged in the Red Lion pub.

Mardell said that the problem with Brown and Blair was compounded not just by enmity and years of close partnership. He added:

Even Blair, with all his charisma, powers of persuasion and whacking majority could not kindle the embers of this dying relationship into brightly burning flames.

Mardell said that even while he was paving the power, Blair and somewhat deferred to the presumed instincts of the people 'an unquestionable mindset of Murdoch'. He had written an article in the Sun headlined "I love the pound". He concluded:

New Labour was more positive about the European Union than any government in the previous 20 years. But even Tony Blair could not swim against the tide of public and press opinion, or at least didn't want to squander his political capital on that project. Numerous times in making this series politicians have made the point 'Europe was scarcely our main concern,' it never was, until it is right now. The Labour government's enthusiasm, even with all the caveats and caution, allowed the Conservative opposition to develop a full-on, no holds barred defence of the pound. And, unencumbered by the diplomatic sensitivities of office, full blown opposition to the direction of the European Union. But was the Blair government about hand Eurosceptics their most powerful ever weapon? A game-changing gift. Immigration: the East and Enlargement – the Poles are coming. Next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

**Observations:** The goal of the programme was to illustrate that Tony Blair had tried to improve EU-UK relations and to lessen anti-EU prejudice in the country, but had perhaps not tried hard enough, and continued to oppose – in 'awkward squad' mode - some EU policies such as an increased military role. Another reason for the failure to shift anti-EU opinion had been the battle between Blair and George Brown about joining the euro. He finally speculated that Labour's enthusiasm allowed 'the Conservative opposition' to develop a full-on, no holds barred defence of the pound, along with full-blown opposition to the direction of the EU.

## **Episode 10**

Mark Mardell commented that 'the conventional wisdom' of Tony Blair's opening remark was not welcome among those opposed to immigration. He then asked whether Blair's government had made a 'catastrophic mistake' based on wrong figures 'which so soured the British public's attitude towards the European project'.

He moved into the meat of the programme by stating that few ideas are unequivocally viewed

as being good, but the collapse of the Berlin Wall was. He said it had shaken the jigsaw of Europe and the former communist states gazed towards the West towards 'prosperity and democracy'. Cued with Ode to Joy, he added that membership of the EU had been 12 for 18 years, so 2004 (expansion) was a 'momentous moment'.

Mardell said that 10 countries had joined in 2004. He suggested that the slightly cynical English view was that as digestion happened, this would prevent EU moves for a while steps towards closer union. The prize for the new members was to be able to travel towards the West.

He added that the new members were certainly happy, but some states, including France were worried about the impact of free movement, and agreed measures to stop people coming to work in them for up to seven years with transitional arrangements. He said that only the Commission 'and the Brits' argued that there should be no such limits.

Mardell said that Blair and Blunkett both 'blamed' (for getting it wrong on volumes) a report from Christian Dussmann, who was (and still was) director of the Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration. It had later been mocked for getting those volumes wrong by 2,000 per cent.

Mardell asked whether the Treasury really thought there would be little impact as a result of the accessions of 2004, or whether they had known and welcomed that the influx would push wages down.

He added that resentment about immigration was not instant, but by 2010, the BBC was running a series called The Poles Are Coming. There were extracts from the programme reflecting resentment, and calling for action to deal with the issues raised by rapid change and for the British way of life to be respected. He added that the debate still raged. He said of the impact of immigration issues on the UK's relationship with the EU:

We've focused in on a decision in 2004, which some see as the turning point, which gave rather theoretical arguments about our relationship with the European Union a sharp edge in many a British town. European policy made such immigration possible, and the British government of the time embraced it. But in asking how that played in the referendum vote, 12 years later, it's important to point out the way the world was changing, chaotically, frighteningly, for the worse. There was the crash of 2008, and then, one of the most important factors in modern politics, pictures, heart-wrenching pictures of children in peril, terrible pictures of people pulled from the sea, people fleeing war or just in search of a better life, risking drowning. And after those pictures, tugging on the heartstrings, more filmic images pulling in the opposite direction. Would-be migrants, crashing against fences, struggling bewildered into a promised land, they had promised themselves, which turned out not to flow with milk and honey, but wormwood and bile. They were not Polish plumbers or Bulgarian barristers of course, but from Africa and the Middle East, and their reflections had little or nothing to do with free movement of European workers. But those in charge back in 2004 argued this is what made the difference.

He added:

In the 45 years of torrid debate, the European question had threatened to tear apart first the Labour Party and then the Conservatives. But the arguments were often highfalutin abstractions, sovereignty and treaties. This Eastern immigration touched people's lives, changed their high streets, perhaps challenged the sense of self. Yet, the initial 2004 influx wasn't an imposition by Brussels, but choice by a British government, which saw clear economic benefit. But this debate erupted as Europe itself was in the middle of another evolution, a new constitution, new referendums, and another practical result of one-time abstraction: the euro crisis, which further tempered any warm feeling towards the union. It played into the hands of a new party and a new charismatic leader, who did more than anyone else to force the question 'in or out', to the very top of the political agenda.

**Observations:** Mr Mardell's main aim appeared to be to demonstrate that the rise of EU immigration after 2004 was thought in 'conventional wisdom' to be a major cause of the 'leave' EU vote, but the fears about immigration – and associated blaming of Brussels - had been both misplaced and confused with other factors such as the economic crisis of 2007/8 and the rising tide of immigration from elsewhere. The the EU had thus been wrongly blamed for something outside its control.

## **Episode 11**

Mark Mardell commented of Farage:

Farage was an on and off leader of UKIP, but from early on part of the anti-European crowd. As an MEP it gave him a platform in the belly of the beast, the European Parliament, home of the Belgian waffle. Speech is often serious, technical, self-indulgent. He set out to make himself the bad boy of Brussels.

Mardell, describing David Cameron's reaction to Farage, said he had made very clear his contempt for UKIP.

After James May had framed the idea of UKIP being xenophobic, Mardell commented that 'with humour and invective', Nigel Farage had excoriated the elite 'and flourished his common touch like a flag'. He declared:

And it was a banner in the ground for the dispossessed and disgruntled to rally round. In an increasingly well-mannered, monochrome political world, he was a vulgar burst of colour, like a character from a novel. Former Deputy Prime Minister and Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, is not impressed.

After a quote from Nick Clegg, he said the European Union was changing and by adopting the steps towards the Constitution, was assuming the trappings of the state. That had been rejected in French and Dutch referendums, but not for long. It was then re-framed as the Lisbon treaty, and despite another referendum against it, the Irish were asked to vote again and it was accepted. This give 'grist to the mill' for those who saw the EU as an unstoppable undemocratic juggernaut crushing all opposition. It was noted in a clip that following the Lisbon Treaty, David Cameron had been 'forced to abandon' his plans for a referendum. Mardell said that for Daniel

Hannan, this was a critical moment (with the clip above which called the decision a 'huge mistake'), and it had led the moment when Nigel Farage could come to the fore with his 'unashamedly old school appeal'.

Mardell then suggested that the financial crash in 2008 added fat to the fire. It also fed 'rage and resentment' among the electorate against politicians who could not handle the crisis. But, nevertheless, in the 2010 general election, UKIP had secured only three per cent of the vote and the Coalition had been formed. Mardell said that David Cameron had reacted to the perceived threat of UKIP by promising in a 'big speech' a promise for an in and out referendum. He added that speech was delivered over breakfast at the HQ of Bloomberg. He said that the speech was 'a moment of existential justification', which UKIP believed had 'banged him in a corner'.

He agreed with Alex Phillips that afterwards, politicians did 'bang on about Europe' and did so now every day. He asked rhetorically whether it had been a defining 'critical moment'. Mardell said that after Bloomberg, the Eastleigh by-election had led to the Conservatives being in third place after UKIP, then UKIP had picked up votes and seats in the 2014 local elections. There was a news extract suggesting that the UK now had a four-party political system.

Mardell said that there were rumours that Daniel Hannan would defect to UKIP, but he had not. Then there was a clip from Douglas Carswell announcing he had joined UKIP and he had then won UKIP's first ever seat (factually wrong? - Bob Spink?)

He added that when Mark Reckless defected and also won a by-election, it was as much about changing UKIP as giving their old party a kicking.

Mardell commented:

But this was never about just one man, it was about at least two men. UKIP had consistently exceeded expectations in European and local elections – the ever-present Nigel punching through into the popular imagination, social media, red top tabloids and the BBC, 'Why do you have to keep interviewing that man?' But they simply couldn't hack it in the general election. Even in the heaviest of the glory days, there was never a real chance of a UKIP majority, minority or any other sort of government. Never a chance of them ruling and deciding. Instead, what they did played to the outlaw image, riding rough on the range, whooping into town, vulgar and aggressive, creating panic among the homesteaders, stampeding the Tory horses, lighting fear in the sheriff's eyes.

Nick Clegg: And I remember saying to Cameron at the time, I said, 'Look, you know, you may think this is doing you a lot of good, you know, pandering to the idea that somehow you're wielding a veto when it's nothing of the sort, but in the end, this is a strategy which leads you nowhere, because your, you know, swivel-eyed anti-European backbenchers will never, ever be satisfied until the United Kingdom is out of the European Union, and, if necessary, you're out of office.'

MM: Out of office indeed. One man had crystallised the mood of some in the public, after



an economic crash which left many sore and out of sorts with the establishment, and capitalised on something beyond his control: a coalition government which turned the established party of protest into an establishment party. The Lib Dems became seen as Cameron's stooges, leaving a gap in the market. Farage had perhaps forced Cameron into a position where he had to fold or raise. But he didn't, couldn't, make the choice himself. It had been Cameron who had capitulated. Next time, on 'Brexit: a Love Story?' we all know where we're going, but as yet it's still hung in the balance for the Prime Minister. There was an election to win or lose, a renegotiation to succeed or fail, friends who had to choose loyalty or betrayal. Five miscalculations and the resignation – next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

**Observations:** Mark Mardell suggested that growing Euroscepticism associated with UKIP was actually based on the 'rise of the bloke' rather than genuine Euroscepticism. He included comment from those who suggested that Nigel Farage's role was over-played and that his skill was only that of a 'rabble-rouser'.

## Episode 12

**Mark Mardell** said the programme was slightly different from others in the series as it wasn't about the broad thrust of history, but rather whether seemingly small steps, miscalculations in the eyes of those who made them, propelled the UK towards EU exit.

Mardell noted that after the 2015 election victory for Cameron, his promise to hold an EU referendum came to the foreground, then suggested he may have felt that he would never have to honour it because he never expected to win in 2015.

Mardell wondered how hard Cameron thought shifting 'the boulder' of the EU problems was going to be, and soon found that the fruits of success tasted sour, as was evidenced by a discussion he had with Theresa Villiers, then secretary for Northern Ireland.

Following on from Villiers' observations about renegotiation and possible resignation, Mardell suggested that Cameron had made 'miscalculations' about both - cabinet ministers did not know they would be allowed to campaign against the Prime Minister (in favour of leave?) without resigning. They did know that in his renegotiation, Cameron was to try draw some of the poison from the EU relationship. He then introduced Jonathan Hill, the UK, ambassador to the EU at the time. Mark Mardell suggested it could have been a critical miscalculation by Cameron, in that he had not read 'brutal domestic politics' with sufficient clarity. He stated:

What he wanted, and some of what he got, did address some big, practical and philosophical questions posed by British membership of the European Union, but it could never be enough for some of his Cabinet.

Mardell then introduced Theresa Villiers again. After her remarks, he said:

By demanding public loyalty from ministers until he'd concluded the renegotiation, Cameron created a cliff-hanger, when he knew full well that some ministers would hurl themselves off the cliff anyway. But it was worse than that, there was a clear domestic demand, at least from his party and the press, to deal with immigration from Europe. His rather wonkish deal didn't do much to curtail it, it didn't shoo the elephant from the room.

Mardell said the Prime Minister allowing Eurosceptics to set the bar high on freedom of movement was seen by Daniel Hannan to be a crucial moment. He said that after Cameron had been told by Merkel that there would be no more concessions, the Mail, the Times and the Express had all attacked the 'deal'. The message had not been rapture, but rupture.

There followed a newsreader clip in which it was said Michael Gove would campaign to Leave, and that he would be supported by half a dozen cabinet ministers. Mardell commented:

It wasn't just friendship that had fractured. The establishment, the government, had split into two rival camps. Some of the old assumptions about referendums were knocked on the head. Losing Gove was perhaps the fourth miscalculation.

Mardell said that after Gove 'Boris' had struck the next blow. He asked whether his handling of the situation had been another miscalculation, and then there was a clip from Lord Hill. He added:

David Cameron followed the playbook of another Prime Minister, Labour's Harold Wilson, some 40 years earlier, lifting Cabinet responsibility, then a swift renegotiation, then the referendum. We looked at this in detail in our second episode. And one thing that emerged was Wilson's cunning – he kept aloof from the fray. Cameron entered in with enthusiasm, but still pulled his punches, not wanting to stoke a Tory civil war. We're going to skip lightly over the campaign itself, but it's worth noting former friends weren't so worried. Cameron kept to Marquis of Queensbury rules in a bloodied knife-fight.

Mardell said the result of the referendum had been a 'stunner', so much so that Lord Hill had not even been a wake to hear it.

Summing up, Mardell opined:

Was Britain's destiny decided by the arrogance of a man who'd never lost anything? Who's belief in his own abilities outweighed the political realities, putting party and power before principle, refusing to fight off those demons besetting his party. Or a man who faced up to an inevitable moment and made it his own, who dealt with a nagging, growing ache and, for the first time in 40 years, gave his countrymen a choice? Perhaps both.

He concluded:

That divide, of course, still haunts our politics. We've highlighted some moments where Cameron took fateful decisions, but does Craig Oliver think those demons could have been kept on the leash? Could things have been different?

Craig Oliver : You probably need to invent a time machine and go back 40 years, and actually people who believe in the European Union needed to make the case for this

international institution. Those arguments were not made over decades, and then in the final few weeks, it's not surprising that actually when you pulled back the sheet, you realise people weren't happy with these things and those arguments had not been won.

MM: Luckily, we have such a time machine – next time, the last time, we'll be looking back over the series and our 45-year relationship and asking, 'Did it have to end like this? Was Europe the poison under the skin of British politics, bound to burst out one way or another? Was it just a Tory virus, an infection made worse by the need to keep one party together in the light of a concerted campaign? Or were the UK and the rest of the EU set on such different parts that a parting of the ways was inevitable. Was de Gaulle right?' A certain idea of Britain, next time, the last time, on Brexit: A Love Story?'

**Observations:** Mark Mardell's central question was whether Britain's destiny had been decided by the arrogance of a man who had never lost anything, and whose belief in his own abilities outweighed his political realities, and putting party and power before principle, refused to fight off the demons besetting his party. Or a man who faced up to an inevitable moment and dealt with a nagging, growing ache for the first time in 40 years and gave his countrymen a choice? Mardell concluded that the divide still haunted 'our politics'. He asked if things could have been different and brought in Craig Oliver, who said that people 40 years ago should have made the case for the EU. Those arguments had not been made over the decades and when the vote came it showed that people weren't happy. This again showed that Mr Mardell was most focused on underplaying the weight of Eurosceptic opinion

### Episode 13

Mark Mardell claimed that the joining-related issues in 1973 – whether Britain should be outside in a European free trade area, or a customs union or asking for a good deal on tariffs – mirrored those of today, though the Foreign Office called it a woolly hotchpotch. He then said that for many, 'Europe' was the answer to two world wars – back then (at joining) based on vivid personal experience. Mardell recapped that two years after joining, there had been a referendum on leaving, with Margaret Thatcher – the woman who became famous for saying 'no' to Europe – then saying yes.

He posed the question – in line with de Gaulle's objections to the UK joining – whether Britain was too much a maritime and global player to have been a suitable member, and whether Mrs Thatcher's approach was a living embodiment of that. He brought in Sir Ivan Rogers to argue to the contrary, and to say that the UK was always a 'European player'. He noted that Margaret Thatcher had nonetheless come to fight Europe 'against continental perfidy' - each strike lauded by an 'eager press'.

Mardell suggested that Thatcher's resignation 'in part over Europe' led to wounds in the Conservative party which could never heal and 'Europe was the cause and symbol of those who

loved the lady still'. Then the Maastricht rebellion 'wrecked' John Major's government 'and some say Europe became a virus in the Conservative bloodstream', which proved contagious to the whole country. Mardell added that Maastricht was remembered most for its rebellions but suggested its true importance was British opt outs 'of this, that and the other.'

He claimed that against this, the European project was fluid, ever-changing and seeking to evolve into something more than it was, looking to bind nations into something less than a country but more than a 'mere institution'. He added that many saw the 'new European project' (the euro) as a 'vain continental fantasy' but it became a currency used by 330 million people in 19 countries. Mardell then brought in comment that it was at this point the UK became 'totally detached' from the project. Mardell said that the UK was in a unique position, part of the single market and customs union, but outside many other projects. He added that a common complaint was that the UK was tricked to join a common market which turned into a political union. He said:

Yet that the termination was always there, it's just as true to say that many British politicians wilfully ignored the way the rules and markets, rights and responsibilities were two sides of a single coin. That economic advantage and grand ambitions were always conjoined, intertwined, and that the political has always had primacy. They're still doing it.

He added that for politicians Europe had not been a priority for politicians and except for those who loathed it was more a 'nuisance to be tiptoed around'. He then observed that the referendum had been held against a crisis of the euro - Brexit was coined after Grexit - and issues of immigration from the EU becoming mixed up with that from the Middle east. The questions were whether against a background of Tory jitters about UKIP, whether any Conservative leader would have had to hold a referendum eventually, and if Cameron had refused, whether he would have been replaced - and would then have lost to Labour, who would have been forced down the same route.

He claimed a better question was whether any leader could have won the referendum at that moment in that year? Mardell noted that Lord Powell did not believe there needed to have been a referendum.

In his summing up, Mardell said Europe had never been a love story because the passion was all on the other side. The gulf of purpose and position was growing wider between us and them, and on such strains, Herculean effort was needed to keep together. Those with passion against the project worked continually at the weak spots, and for them, Brexit was a love story. But in 45 years, the tendrils that bind had snaked around our nations, and an operation to separate the UK looked more complex than one to separate Siamese twins.

**Observations:** This illustrated the range of Mark Mardell's 'pro' EU prejudices. The views in the final programme were all – except Michael Howard – from pro-EU figures who argued

predominantly that the relationship could have been different and better. The blame for them not being was the 'Tory civil war', David Cameron's inept miscalculations, and above all, the initial poisoning caused by a variety of factors such as Margaret Thatcher, and the hostile and lying UK press. In his final programme, Mr Mardell suggested – as has already been noted - that the real passion in the UK-'Europe' relationship had come from the 'passionate' Brexiteers who had gradually chipped away at the British attitude towards the EU. This was in line with the bulk of the contributions by guest speakers: that there was nothing wrong with 'Europe' itself because it was needed to maintain peace and ensure good governance: opinion towards it had been corrupted by lies and misinformation.

# APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGY

News-watch implements a range of robust analytical tools in its study of news and current affairs output, based on firmly-established academic principles, and involving both quantitative and qualitative components.

The bedrock of the approach is that a selected group of programmes are viewed or listened to in their entirety for a set period of time. A detailed log is compiled, with comprehensive information on all the news items broadcast, their running times and full details of those who contributed, including presenters, correspondents and guest speakers. Individual reports of interest are then fully transcribed and further information is entered into a customised database. This database is constructed around a coding frame piloted during News-watch's early studies, and collates information on each programme item and contributor, including the number of words spoken by interviewees. This data is used to provide statistical information on the programmes being sampled; the transcripts become the focus of a detailed textual analysis, which focuses on theme, approach, tone and content.

Many inequalities – particularly those which develop over an extended period – are impossible for viewers and listeners to perceive by simply watching a television programme or listening to a radio broadcast. Without a rigorous monitoring framework, discussion of media content can rarely be sustained beyond the speculative or impressionistic. **Quantitative research** techniques – specifically content analyses – are able to confirm or disconfirm intuitive impressions, through the analysis of specific recurrent elements within a large number of media texts.

News-watch's analysis measures a number of quantitative variables: how much airtime is given to a particular issue or subject compared to other areas of news; the prominence of particular stories within a programme's running order; and to investigate which voices are allowed most access to a given debate. Data is cross-referenced with earlier investigations to identify long-term trends. The theoretical concept of most relevance here is that of 'agenda-setting' - the hypothesis that while the media may not tell audiences what to *think*, it may tell them what to think *about*.<sup>21</sup> Quantitative analysis allows News-watch to establish exactly how much time and space is being devoted to specific themes during particular periods, and which arguments are being given precedence in on-air debates.

**Qualitative research** methods are less concerned with the statistical measurement of frequency, and more with the matter of how individuals and groups understand and construct meanings from particular media texts. A number of distinct properties may be assessed, including: the overall thematic structure; how interviews are framed using introductions, correspondent reports and soundbites from other speakers; the quality of editorial judgment and content; the lexical decisions of journalists and presenters; and the interplay between interviewer and interviewee. When the monitoring schedule involves televised material, it is also possible to consider how visual signs - camera angles, locations, lighting and graphics – can combine to create a particular meaning. Attention must also be paid to how a particular

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<sup>21</sup> Jensen, A Handbook of Media and Communication Research, Routledge, 2002, p.146

text operates in its wider context, whether as a component part of an individual programme, as part of a series of reports on the same theme across a number of programmes, or its place within wider social and political discussion and argument, including other media.

Contemporary media studies theory indicates that only by using a number of different analytical tools in tandem can a series of texts be fully and properly assessed, and that when quantitative and qualitative techniques are used in combination, the resultant analysis is invariably stronger.<sup>22</sup>

News-watch has worked consistently to ensure that its research methods are fair, equitable, thorough, replicable, and take into account new developments in media theory.

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<sup>22</sup> Deacon et al, *Researching Communications*, London, Arnold, 1999, p.134

# APPENDIX II: TRANSCRIPTS

## 1. Fanfare for the Future

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MARK MARDELL: It was quite a moment: January 1, New Year's Day 1973. The Daily Mail, priced three new pence, had a special front-page.

ANNOUNCER READING DAILY MAIL: For 10 years the Daily Mail has campaigned for this day. We have not wavered in our conviction that Britain's best and brightest future is with Europe. Europe here we come!

MM: Yes, in those days, the Daily Mail was in favour of the Common Market, and the Today programme unwittingly revealed what they thought joining Europe really meant.

DOUGLAS CAMERON: A very good morning to you from Douglas Cameron, here on the Today programme. (*Music: La Marseillaise*)

MM: Ah, the French, who for so long argued we weren't really European. Of course, there was passionate, long-standing opposition at home too. But at this moment it was rather drowned out by the sound of celebrations. (*Music: Fanfare for Europe*) That's Fanfare for Europe, written by the composer Edward Gregson, he was 27 at the time.

EDWARD GREGSON: From what I remember, I had a phone call one day saying, 'We're planning to do a big concert at the Albert Hall and it's a celebration of our entry into Europe, and what we want to do is to start the concert with a specially composed fanfare saying right, boom, boom, this is it, let's make a song and dance about it.' And so, obviously, the nature of what you wanted to write for an occasion like that was a kind of big statement so it sounds quite stately and triumphant, which is kind of, I think, symbolic of what Britain felt at the time, actually, about going into Europe.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: a Love Story?' There's a question mark there, a big one. Was the UK's relationship with Europe ever really amorous, ever less than lukewarm marriage of convenience? We'll be examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, asking if the future was written in the past. Sometimes looking at those moments under odd lights and at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now. So, let's step back, 45 years ago, the UK joined the six: France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. We were finally in, in the Common Market. It had been a rocky road with many missteps. The road ahead would be no less tortuous and twisting. Many political careers would be left like so much wreckage on the highway, before we eventually took the slipway marked 'Exit' in 2016. We'll look at those twists and turns and ask if the ending should have been such a surprise. Perhaps the love affair was doomed from the very start. And while 1973 wasn't at the very start, it was certainly a milestone on the journey. The leader of the opposition, Harold Wilson, condemned the spending of £350,000 on celebrations as an outrage. But for others, like Edward Gregson, this was a new beginning for a new generation.

EG: Coming up, being brought up in the 60s, we had a totally different view about Europe, because I'd already travelled to a number of countries in Europe when I was a student, so Europe became less of a kind of Alice in Wonderland world, and more of a kind of . . . something which we could identify with. And, and certainly for me and my generation, I think, it was an exciting time knowing that we were going to, in a sense become Europeans, if that's the right phrase to use.



MM: For one man, this moment was a glorious triumph, a climax to a lifelong desire. The Prime Minister, Edward Heath, had no doubts that Britain's destiny lay within the European Economic Community, to give the Common Market its formal name at that time. Intense, intellectual, musician, bachelor, sailor, Heath was not cut of the common cloth. Sarah Morrison, former vice-chair of the Conservative party began a lifelong friendship around this time. She knew this famously cold man perhaps better than anyone else. But their first serious encounter was when Heath quizzed her on, to him, the central question, her European credentials.

SARAH MORRISON: Almost one of the first conversations that I remember having with him was after the veto. He said, 'You of all people ought to understand about Europe.' I said, 'Why?' He said, 'Well, after all, your father was killed in the last war and your grandfather was killed in the one before that, just start thinking.'

MM: Heath had always been driven, serious even as a student. His first trip abroad at the age of 21 was no jolly jaunt, it took in the Nazi Nuremberg Rallies, where he met some of Hitler's henchmen. The experience deepened his fierce opposition to appeasement.

EDWARD HEATH: it was really a terrifying oppression, there was a control of great masses of people.

UNNAMED INTERVIEWER: So you felt very conscious of the Nazi menace?

EH: Oh, very much so.

MM: After the war, Europe tried to pull together, to the alarm of many British politicians who attempted to thwart the project for years, before those in government reluctantly, hesitantly, decided there was no alternative, they'd simply have to join. Only to find De Gaulle blocking the road. The leader of the free French in the war, the president himself was no fan of the project, except with France as its master. To the British joining, he said 'non', not once but twice. The UK showed, he said:

CHARLES DE GAULL (*Actor's voice*) Deep-seated hostility to the construction of Europe.

MM: His successor as French president, George Pompidou, was more accommodating. Top secret talks began. The conduit was Lord Armstrong, Britain's most distinguished civil servant, then Heath's principal private secretary, in hush-hush negotiations with his French opposite number, Michel Guber (*phonetic*), painful, slow, and then a breakthrough.

LORD ARMSTRONG: The negotiations between Pompidou and Heath lasted for two days, and there was some point that Heath and Pompidou had been discussing, where there was some disagreement about a figure or something, and they decided to remit the matter to Guber and me, so we left the dinner after the coffee, and went and had a meeting upstairs. I had Peter Thornton with me, and he said, rather disarmingly, 'I could say more in detail about this, if you would like me to do so?' And Guber looked across at me and said, 'Nous non-voulons pas', and I knew then that we were on the right course. And sure enough, the following day, Heath and Pompidou agreed.

MM: So when the French didn't want any more to be said, when the agreement came, what was his reaction when he . . . did you tell him that night?

LA: I told him that night, of course, yes. He was greatly relieved. I don't think he was counting his chickens at that stage, because he still had to talk to Pompidou about a number of things, but I think at that point we felt that this might be going to go the right way and not the wrong way.

MM: But the most important chicken to be counted was Britain's true purpose. Pompidou said the crux was whether the UK shared the idea of Europe. Having decided it did, or at least Mr Heath did, led to a rather awkward joint TV appearance.

SM: I remember teasing him, when he and Monsieur Pompidou were on British television, on the news, sitting on plastic chairs with thin stems and they both like misshapen eggs that were about to fall out of rather badly-made egg cups. And I saw Ted not long after and I said, 'Well, in future if you want anybody to take Europe seriously, let alone you and your friend Monsieur Pompidou, for god's sake don't look like figures of fun sitting on stalks overlapping at the edge and about to fall off, you couldn't listen to a word you said, because I was so worried whether you are going to fall off those ghastly chairs.' Ted said, 'How typical of you to fix on that,' he said, 'totally unimportant'. I'm happy to say, not all that long afterwards, when Madame Pompidou came to lunch or dinner with Ted, and I said something about that, she said, 'Ooh, I said exactly the same thing, you were quite right', so I was thrilled. And I said to Ted, 'There you are, it wasn't only me', and Ted just said, rather acidly, 'Well, I suppose you're not always wrong.'

MM: The debate that had raged for years had been fierce, among the politicians, indeed, among the civil servants. The Treasury was against it, it would damage the balance of payments, prices would go up. There were fears about the English language, about the relationship with the Commonwealth, but it was the argument about food prices which really struck home.

DOUGLAS JAY: The effect of this country joining the Common Market under present conditions and on the terms which we could now reasonably hope to get would be economically disastrous to this country. In this first place . . .

ENOCH POWELL: Because you see, in the Common Market, the central government or organisation of a Common Market is going to manage those countries more and more as the years go by. So I fear that in the Common Market, we should have more government as time went on, and not less government.

MM: Labour's Douglas Jay, and Conservative for a little while longer, Enoch Powell. And from Conservative MP Neil Martin, speaking in 1970, the big question – where would it all end up?

NEIL MARTIN: . . . that if we sign the Treaty of Rome, we are getting on a moving staircase from which there is no escape, and when you get off the top of the moving staircase, you land up in a United States of Europe, a country called Europe, where Britain will be . . .

MM: Lord Armstrong feels that was not a great concern of Heath's at the time.

LA: I can't really say I know what he would have thought on the issue of sovereignty.

MM: You never discussed it, you never said, 'You do realise, Prime Minister, this does mean giving up sovereignty?'

LA: We didn't know what it meant really, to that, to that extent, we were joining a primarily economic community and we were clearly sharing sovereignty in certain aspects of that. I don't believe that he envisaged a community of 28 as opposed to the 9 we were creating in 1971. I don't think he would have begun to think about having a euro at that stage, or about having a European Central Bank. But he would have said that sovereignty by itself isn't anything, it's what you make of it.

MM: And while these big issues were debated intensely, there was a bigger issue as the backdrop. The country was no longer the self-confident, proud master of Empire, we were the sick man of Europe, beset by economic woes. After all, there were a million unemployed, big iconic companies were going bust, there was a pay-freeze and a wave of strikes. And, from a

distance at least, Europe feels like a debate within the elite, not the burning concern on the streets. And it seemed that debate had come to an end, the conclusion. At least it *seemed* so. In fact, it was only just starting. But a critical date in the calendar of our story was October 28, 1971. The father of the European project, Jean Monnet, sat watching in the gallery of the House of Commons as the British Parliament voted to join the six. The fractious debate breached party lines, some Tories defied Heath and it was pro-market Labour rebels who gave the Prime Minister his big majority, bigger than expected, 112. He said, 'Millions around the world would rejoice', and left the chamber to cheers.

LA: He was clearly very moved by that. I think there was a sense of fulfilment, but what I remember particularly vividly is that after that vote he came back to 10 Downing Street, there were lots of parties, celebrations going on around the place, to all of which he was invited, and to all of which he went, briefly, but before he went to any of them, he went upstairs in the house at Downing Street, where his father and his brother and sister-in-law were, and I was there and one or two other people, and he sat down at his clavichord and he played the First Prelude from the 48 Preludes and Fugues by JS Bach. (*sounding emotional*) And it was saying something about how he felt about being back in Europe. It was a very moving moment.

MM: And you were moved as well?

LA: (*sounding emotional*) Very much so . . . I still am to think about it. For him, music, and particularly that music, was obviously tied up in his mind with, with the political side of it.

MM: And explain to me, I'm not a musician, you are, like him – what did that piece of music mean?

LA: It's very . . . orderly. It's very beautiful, it's very . . . plain and clear. For him that music had meant, for many years, a very great deal, and I think it was part of his sense that we should be back in the centre of things in Europe.

MM: That too is very Heath. Years later, Sarah Morrison sat listening to him play.

SM: And I'm sitting on the sofa, and he was playing the piano, and after a bit I said, 'Aren't we going to go on,' you, talking about whatever we were talking. 'Shh, I am talking to you.'

MM: Did he show equal disdain for talking directly to the British people? Was this famously cold man possessed by a burning passion which he couldn't communicate to the country? Or perhaps it wasn't like that at all. Perhaps he didn't see the need.

LA: I don't think he was very good at conveying that sort of emotion, but I don't know that Ted Heath himself did much by his own words, as it were, to, to encourage it. I don't think he was that kind of man. He, he didn't easily display emotional feeling.

MM: I suppose some would say that was the fault of, not just one man, but the European project generally?

LA: Well, obviously, there were people who didn't want to go in, but . . . I think he felt that the intellectual arguments, if that's the right way to put them, the political arguments were overwhelmingly strong.

MM: No small talk, no soaring rhetoric, but always the music.

EH: This is a powerful organ, certainly for the size of this chapel, when you've got everything out, a chord or two, you can hear how much there is in it. (*plays organ*) Bring out a little more. A little more still. Soft pedalling there.

MM: Soft-peddalling, indeed. It's the big historical charge against Heath, that he misled the British people about what we were getting into, downplayed the loss of sovereignty, spoke as if the market was just an economic club, not a profoundly political project. It's an accusation which has grown in power and saliency, repeated again and again, right up to the 2016 referendum. Is it fair?

SM: I look upon that as complete baloney. We'd had the De Gaulle veto, it had been on the agenda, so the idea that he was deceiving is complete nonsense.

MM: Even as celebrations for the love affair were in full swing, there were plans for divorce in the offing. The man known as Wedgy – Anthony Wedgewood Benn, proposed what was considered an off-the-wall idea, a plebiscite on British membership. Next time, the 1975 referendum on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 2. Yes to Britain in Europe

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MARK MARDELL: June 1975. 10cc were heading for the top of the charts, that year Mrs Thatcher had been elected leader of the Opposition, to Harold Wilson's Labour government. PG Woodhouse had died in America, Microsoft was founded. (*Music, 10cc, 'I'm not in love'*) and here, an historic first.

PETER SHORE: The government asks you to vote Yes. Clearly and unmistakably. This issue has hung around for far too long, creating too much uncertainty.

MM: Britain's first ever nationwide referendum had cabinet ministers at each other's throats.

ROY JENKINS: If we come out, you're in favour of immediately negotiating for a free trade area? Could you just now answer?

TONY BENN: (*fragment of word, or word unclear*) certainly, we shall negotiate . . .  
(*fragment of word, unclear*)

TB: Well, let . . .

INTERVIEWER (*speaking over*) Yeah, well you see . . .

TB: Will you please allow me to answer the question?

SHIRLEY WILLIAMS: There was a bitter battle in the Labour Party. Straightforwardly on, you know, do we hate Europe, and do we think it's a capitalist conspiracy.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' There's a question mark there, a big one. Was the UK's relationship with Europe ever really amorous, ever less than a lukewarm marriage of convenience? We'll be examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, asking if the future was written in the past. Sometimes looking at those moments under odd lights and at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now. As the United Kingdom held its first ever nationwide referendum, 10cc had a hit on their hands. (*Music, 10cc, 'I'm not in love'*) Just two years after we joined the Common Market, it seems we were not in love, not passionately, not whole-heartedly at any rate. That question mark I talked about had just got an awful lot bigger. On it hung the fate of a Prime Minister, a government, the country's relationship with Europe. For, with less than 30 months' membership under our belt Harold Wilson's Labour government was asking us to vote on whether we should leave the Common Market. The verbal dust-ups among the politicians enlivened a lacklustre campaign. Freshly appointed to the Cabinet, the previous year as Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Affairs, Shirley Williams took to the streets to argue the case.

SW (Archive) I think if we come out, we will be a country that turns in on itself, which has no sense of responsibility beyond itself. And I think, if I may put it very directly, I think that would break our hearts as a country.

SW (*present*): It was a much more emotional time, people forget that. The Vietnam War had ended a year before, and therefore people's minds were much more tuned to the whole concept of the European Community as having something to do with peace. One of the important things was, for example, the . . . the symbol that was used by the pro-Europe people was a dove of peace.

MM: From a distance, at least, this seems like a campaign where the politicians made all the running, the voters playing something of a bit part in somebody else's drama.

VOX POP MALE: What have they got for us? Nothing, and what have they done for us? Ever since we've been in the, we've been in debt, and we're going to be in debt for ever and ever and ever I think.

VOX POP FEMALE: I mean, I'm going to vote that we get out, because I don't think it's done us much good so far.

VOX POP MALE (OR POLITICIAN?) They've already shown their incompetence. Last year they sold thousands of tonnes of butter at cheap prices to the Soviet . . . to Soviet Russia, at, at giveaway prices, and, and the taxpayers of the Western countries have had to foot the bill. And I think this is the economics of the madhouse.

MM: The Prime Minister's parliamentary aide, MP Frank Judd, now Lord Judd, wanted to leave for a more high-minded reason.

LORD JUDD: We were old-fashioned internationalists, and we felt that the EEC at that stage was too restrictive, it was too much like greater nationalism, we wanted to be together with the (word unclear, 'Nordics'?)

MM: But as this maelstrom of debate swirled all around Harold Wilson who was, after all, the head of a government recommending a Yes vote, he kept his distance, to the frustration of Lord Donoghue, Bernard Donoghue, who worked in Number Ten as a senior advisor to the Prime Minister.

LORD DONOGHUE: Wilson's view was the Prime Minister had to be above the battle, so he didn't join in the street-fighting in the way that David Cameron did. Wilson at the end made it clear that it was in the national interest to go into Europe, in his view, but he didn't campaign strongly. Also his political secretary, Lady Falkender was passionately for leaving, and . . . when I and the press secretary Joe Haines put in the Prime Minister's diary some dates for meetings where he would go and address them, and presumably speak in a balanced way in favour of going in, she went into the private office and crossed them all out of the diary.

MM: (music: Kraftwerk, 'Autobahn') German band Kraftwerk, down to number twelve. 'Drive, drive, drive down the Autobahn' indeed. For some, the European road to modernity was the cause – for others a betrayal. The left's opposition was a curious brew: a pinch of old-fashioned nationalism, a huge dollop of hostility towards this new capitalist club. And then the spice of enthusiasm for the multi-racial, world-spanning Commonwealth. Wilson himself was worried about betraying kinsmen for a problematic and marginal advantage in selling washing machines in Dusseldorf, as he sniffily put it. In 1971, a special party conference voted against joining. But then it happened, we joined, and suddenly Harold Wilson was leading a fractured party towards a general election, with tensions at boiling point. But the intense, charismatic, increasingly left-wing former Viscount Stansgate, Anthony Wedgwood Benn – 'Wedgy' only eventually known as Tony Benn, had an idea, he was becoming more and more hostile to the Common Market.

TONY BENN: Although it was interesting to see a mixture of advisers of different nationalities, I felt as if I was going almost as a slave to Rome, the whole relationship was wrong, here was I, an elected man doing a job and could be removed, and here were these people with more power than I had, no accountability to anybody.

MM: So Benn argued, 'let the people have a vote'. It was seen as a provocative, hair-brained scheme. Wilson dismissed it out of hand. (Music, Wings, 'Listen to What the Man Said') In at number ten – Wings. 'Listen to what the man said' – and Wilson did, eventually, but the very idea of a referendum was an abomination to Shirley Williams's older colleagues.

SW: They all had memories of Hitler and Mussolini, I mean, I did *vaguely*, but I was a child when Hitler came to power and so forth. But they could always see Mussolini and Hitler as the sort of people who created the destruction of democracy, and use the referendum as their main way of doing so, and it was their way of excusing and explaining why they had destroyed democracy, effectively.

MM: But the pipe-smoking, Gannex raincoat-wearing Harold was a complex man, a Yorkshire academic, an Oxford don by the time he was 21, but also a man of the people, widely seen as calculating, Wilson saw the possibilities in officially permitting his colleagues the latitude they were already taking. Lord Donoghue.

LD: When we came towards the election, it had already, it was by then in the manifesto, and it was a very useful device for Wilson, not to have arguments about Europe in the election campaign, because it solved it. What the referendum offered was a way of saying 'don't argue about it now, we'll settle it after the election, with a referendum, we'll take the will of the people, and so we'll settle it then.'

MM: Here's Shirley Williams again.

SW: He didn't like it, he, he shared some of the traditional views about referenda, he didn't trust them, he didn't like them. But he was persuaded that the party was so split and the bitterness was so great that the only way to keep the party together was to have a referendum. Once he got the referendum, he then started thinking about, 'How do I win it?' I cared about not doing it, but he cared about how you won it when you had to do it.

MM: Wilson went into the election promising not just a referendum but another novelty - renegotiation of Britain's membership of the Common Market. It worked rather better for him than for David Cameron some 40 years on.

NEWSREADER: Britain's Common Market negotiations drew to a close last night, when the heads of government of the nine, at their Dublin summit, reached agreement on the two big issues . . .

HAROLD WILSON: The government has renegotiated the terms of entry, we've made improvements in them. Improvements that, in our view, are good enough to justify Britain remaining a member of the community, in our own interests, but not only that . . .

MM: The year before the referendum itself, 1974, had been tumultuous. It began with the UK's first post-war recession and a three-day week. There were a wave of IRA bombings in Britain, and not one but two general elections, seeing Labour's return to power. So the referendum had to be held. Freed from collective responsibility, private battles became very public. Cabinet ministers seemed to relish going at each other hammer and tongs. You can hardly get more public than a debate on *Panorama*. (*Music: Panorama Theme*) On the right, Roy Jenkins, then-Home Secretary, on the left, Tony Benn.

TB: Now, on the continent, the traditions of democracy are different from ours. 30 years ago, Germany was under Hitler, Italy under Mussolini, France has had a succession of revolutions and counterrevolution and coup d'état. We, for many centuries, have fought for the right to give the ultimate power to our own people. Now, nobody can pretend, least of all you, because I know you have an idea of a political union, that's part of the id—the European idea, can really argue that there isn't a price to be paid for this, and the price unfortunately is paid by the electorate.

ROY JENKINS: I don't agree with this version. The commissioners are appointed by the various governments of the day. But the commissioners, once appointed are on all major questions the servants of the Council of Ministers, and the Council of Ministers . . .

MM: Was Wilson dismayed? Bernard, now Lord Donoghue was with him in Number Ten as all this was going on.

LD: Well, he didn't like that, but he knew it wasn't a single unit. He knew they squabbled.

MM: But he must've been cross with Tony Benn?

LD: No, he was an enormous forgiving person, he . . . he quite understood why people did these things, that's what politics is.

MM: It sounds a very cerebral approach, he didn't say, over a glass of something late at night, 'Bernard, those so-and-sos'?

LD: Well, if he was very tired. But I would have said, of the people I've worked with, Harold Wilson said that less than any he just . . . he loved that we often had drinks late at night, and he opened, for his junior staff, the bottles of beer and poured the glasses out, there was no side to him at all. And he would . . . he would just smile and laugh at it.

MM: Lord Judd remembered good-natured discussions between himself, a junior Member of Parliament and the Prime Minister, even after he'd made a passionate, affective speech to fellow MPs.

LJ: That evening, I was sitting in Harold's room in the house, and we were having a bit like . . . I suppose . . . a university teacher and his student. We were sitting discussing my speech, and he was commending me on it and saying how much . . . but, but explaining to me why he had a different position. Now, I cannot imagine the PPS of the leader of the opposition should do that and still be there without . . . I mean, these days, his feet wouldn't touch the ground, would they.

MM: But this wasn't just about being nice. It was about keeping personal distance, floating above a dangerous affray. So what did Wilson himself actually believe about Europe? Lord Donoghue.

LD: Wilson, of course, was a special . . . case, because he wasn't really of the left, and he wasn't of the right. He was a small 'c' conservative, provincial, you know, middle class, non-conformist, but he was rising up in the Labour Party, up the traditional left wing ladder, the Tribune ladder, where accumulated the support of the left wing, so he spoke to them. Also he was never an internationalist. I mean, for Harold his cottage in the Scilly Islands, to me, sometimes seemed to represent the limit of his global reach. He . . .

MM: Did you ever say that to him?

LD: I wish I had. He would've laughed. I mean, he was the most tolerant person on earth, you could say anything to him.

MM: (*Music, Tammy Wynette, 'Stand by your man'*) Tammy Wynette was charting at number five. The British public did standby Wilson. By the time of the vote it was in the bag, everyone knew Britain would vote to stay in, with the press, the political establishment and most of big business urging a Yes vote.

NEWSREADER: Yes to Britain in Europe – that's the referendum verdict as the results flood in.



MM: The result was in and pretty much settled the argument, for a generation anyway. Bernard Donoghue, inside Number Ten, wrote a victory speech for the Prime Minister.

LD: I did draft a statement for the Prime Minister to make, welcoming our victory but he felt that was a bit (*laughs*) a bit too enthusiastic.

MM: (*incredulous*) He felt it was too enthusiastic to welcome the victory he campaigned for?

LD: (*speaking over*) Yeah, well he . . . well, yes, he only campaigned very cautiously, and the next morning I said to him, 'Which way did you vote?' – I knew. And he had indicated what he thought was the right vote for Britain, but of course with Harold Wilson, who was quite a complex character, who knows what he might have done. But he said, 'I voted to Remain.' He said, 'Bernard, pulling out of Europe will put completely the wrong people in power in this country.'

MM: (*Music: Gilbert O'Sullivan, 'I don't love you, but I think I like you'*) New in at number 41, Gilbert O'Sullivan, 'I don't love you, but I think I like you', probably pretty much sums it up. Enoch Powell, former Conservative cabinet minister struck an ominous, perhaps prophetic note in defeat.

ENOCH POWELL: The British people do not mean it, because they still have not been able to credit the implications of being in the Common Market. They still think they will be a nation, they still think they will govern and tax and legislate for themselves, they are mistaken. It's not the fault of many of the pro-Marketeers that they are mistaken, but it is a thing so incredible to them that I'm not inclined to blame them overmuch. But they will learn.

MM: The referendum device perhaps didn't work in the end. Some of the Labour right did split from the party six years later, but it worked for a while. Which raises the question was Mr Wilson cannier, cleverer than David Cameron? Or simply luckier? The leader of the opposition pronounced herself thrilled by the result.

MARGARET THATCHER: Conservatives have consistently supported the European idea and they've put that into effect on polling day.

INTERVIEWER: You're claiming this is a success for the Conservative Party?

MT: They couldn't, indeed, have done it without us.

MM: During the campaign, Mrs Thatcher had made more of an effort than Wilson, even wearing a curiously colourful jumper featuring all the flags of the Common Market. But she wouldn't remain thrilled. From budget battles to Bruges, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

### 3. Battling Maggie's Blues

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(Music, 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out out')

NEWSREADER: Argentina has invaded the Falkland Islands.

UNNAMED SPEAKER: Just a minute.

UNNAMED SPEAKER 2: Senor, un minuto!

US: If you take the gun out of my bag I'm going to (*words unclear*)

US2: (*words unclear*)

US: . . . if you take the gun away.

US: Senor.

SUE LAWLEY (?) Reports from the Falklands tell of a deadly cat and mouse game around Port Stanley.

NEWSREADER: Half Britain's miners, 100,000 of them are on strike over pit closures. There's been trouble at one pit in Scotland . . .

MM: It was a time of conflict, a time of change, with one voice rising above all the rest.

MARGARET THATCHER: We are not asking for a penny piece of community money for Britain, what we are asking is for a very large amount of our own money back.

MM: These were the years when Europe became a battleground.

MT: You really can't go on under a regime in which Germany and ourselves do the main financing of the community, and all the others take out.

MM: The years when Europe became a joke.

ROWEN ATKINSON: Britain is paying more to the EEC than anybody else, because everyone else in the EEC hates Britain, that's why.

MM: Were they also the years when many in Britain were taught to see the European Community as an enemy to be vanquished.

LORD HANNAY (?): The image of Battling Maggie, trying to get our money back or stop them subsidising agriculture and so on, yeah, that . . . that, that played pretty well, so it was erm . . . a recurrent theme.

MM: The last time we left Mrs Thatcher, she was leader of the opposition, declaring she was thrilled Britain had voted to stay in the Common Market. As Prime Minister, her long fight to cut the amount the UK paid into the EEC budget changed her tone, and that changed the British political debate for a generation. I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' There's a question mark there, a big one. Was the UK's relationship with Europe ever really amorous, ever less than a lukewarm marriage of convenience? We'll be examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, asking if the future was written in the past. Sometimes looking at those moments under odd lights and at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now. Before the Dublin Summit in the dying days of November 1979, the civil service memos had flown thick

and fast. It was, all agreed, a crisis in the making, a grave crisis with the danger it could become a prolonged crisis, which would underline the seriousness of the crisis. And Britain's new Prime Minister appeared to be loving every minute of it.

MT: We could have settled at this particular European Council, had we been prepared just to take away £350 million, because that was what was offered provided one was prepared to say that that was the end of the story. Now, you would never have expected me to settle for one third of a loaf, and indeed it would still have left Britain with much, much, much too big a net contribution.

MM: The comedians were also making the most of it.

ROWEN ATKINSON: I have here the most recent analysis of yearly donations by member countries of the European Economic Community. Belgium, Holland and Denmark, £3 billion; Italy, £1 million and four tonnes of quick-mix cannelloni (*laughter from audience*) Germany, £2 million; France, 38p (*laughter from audience*); Ireland, two hats. The United Kingdom - £4000 million. Luxembourg: an evening with Princess Astrid.

MM: Rowen Atkinson, from the TV comedy show *Not The Nine O'Clock News*. Sean Hardie was one of the scriptwriters on that programme.

SEAN HARDIE: I remember that Britain changed in a way that it hasn't really changed for twenty years in terms of how the British and how the English saw themselves. And suddenly there was a lot of anger around at the time. There was anger on the streets, there was anger in politics, and it was very polarised. Europe was quite peripheral in an odd sort of way until Thatcher made it very central in a sense because she suddenly became an aggressive English nationalist. And we hadn't seen one of those (*laughter in voice*) for a long time.

MM: Mrs Thatcher was genuinely outraged, insistent that Britain was paying far more than its fair share of the Common Market bill. For a start, 70% of it was spent on the common agricultural policy, which didn't benefit Britain very much. And she calculated our share soon go up to £1000 million a year, much more than most of the others. But her indignation was honed to an edge by the attitude of the men around the table. The Irish Prime Minister said she was 'adamant, persistent and repetitive'. Others said worse. The French Prime Minister snidely referred to her background, she was, he said, 'a grocer's daughter'. Lord Hannay, David Hannay was in charge of European policy at the Foreign Office.

LORD HANNAY: Giscard was very patronising, and sort of patted her on the head and said 'there, there' and didn't help.

MM: And Giscard called her 'a grocer's daughter', which, of course, she was, but it was not said in a very polite way.

LH: No, well, I think Chirac called her a fishwife too, at some stage.

MT: We couldn't possibly accept £350 million in full and final settlement of our claim. So, the position has gone into suspense pending another Council. I must tell you that I'm not overoptimistic about the result of that Council.

LH: And I took over the day after that, as the undersecretary of the Foreign Office who was the principal official in the Foreign Office, giving advice to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on the budget rebate.

MM: Who is this, with the unenviable job? Lord Hannay, then David Hannay. He'd already had two senior roles in Europe, including negotiating our membership, but now he was back.

LH: My predecessor went off to be number two in Washington, and I moved into his office and found the whole of the Foreign Office lying flat on their backs in astonishment at what the

Prime Minister had done in Dublin, and I was . . . job (*sic*) was to pick up the pieces, and get the negotiation going again, where it had come to a dead halt as a result of the row in Dublin. I think they felt that the Prime Minister had broken an awful lot of china, that she had damaged a lot of very valuable bilateral relationships with people like the French and the Germans whom she had managed to lecture and shout at quite a lot, and they were upset by this.

MM: The marriage of convenience had turned sour – this row was the relationship, a permanent storm at its centre, dragging on for five long years. This was a crisis, calculated, carefully coordinated crisis.

LORD ARMSTRONG: She would sometimes come through to my room in the Cabinet Office and put her feet up and have a glass of whiskey and we discuss things.

MM: Mrs Thatcher's cabinet secretary, Lord Armstrong, wrote in a memo marked 'secret', that we had the means at our disposal to be 'difficult'. In another, headed 'secret and personal', he told the Prime Minister she might need to precipitate a crisis of the community, short, he added, of putting the UK's membership at risk. 'Difficult' she was, but he noted European leaders felt that she was committed to Europe in a way her predecessors had not been. He understood her better than most. Did she, over those whiskeys, did she moan about Europe?

LA: She moaned about some of the people. She didn't moan about the subject. I never felt that she was wanting to get out of Europe. I think she thought that it was a . . . something of a battle zone. And she wanted to be in there, standing up for Britain, not outside.

MM: By the time of another critical summit of 1984, Britain was still being difficult, obstructing changes the others wanted. It's probably no accident the French held it at Fontainebleau, a grand imperial palace designed to overwhelm and intimidate – to no effect. Mrs Thatcher was just as adamant, just as repetitive, just as difficult. With the man representing the newest member of the club, the Greek Prime Minister, suggesting it would be a relief if Britain left the EEC. But this was a different Britain, perhaps a different Mrs Thatcher, wreathed in the victory of the Falklands war, battling the miners, vanquished Tory wets at her feet, fallen beneath her headlong charge. Mistress of a more self-confident nation. Bitterly divided, yes, but used to a Prime Minister who seemed to relish conflict over consensus. Enoch Powell saw an impact in all of that.

ENOCH POWELL: There has been an accession of self-confidence to this country, which will make it much more disposed to say, and now we are going to exercise what undeniably has, from the beginning, been our constitutional and moral and internationally accepted right, namely to say we went in and now we come out.

MM: The leaders' menu at Fontainebleau of foie gras, lobster and lamb with wild mushrooms was extravagant. It features Picasso's *Portrait of a Young Girl* on the front. Mrs Thatcher used hers to jot down impatient bullet points. 'Threshold', 'Different', 'Clarify problems', 'Less, much less.' She crossly remarked on the cost of the hotel where they all stayed. Lord Armstrong remembers one particular moment.

LA: She was put up in the château at Fontainebleau, and she had a very splendid room, and we were all sitting round there having a discussion, and she began to get rather strong, rather heated, and we'd all been warned about security and the probability that the rooms would be bugged, so that French would overhear what was being said. As she got increasingly excited and controversial, I pointed up at the light and she looked at me as if I was mad or something, and then suddenly she (*fragment of word, or word unclear*) twigged, and she leant forward and she looked up at the supposed microphone in the candlestick, and she said all the most outrageous (*laughter in voice*) things she could think of to say. We all sat there frozen with (*laughter in voice*) with, with fear for would . . . be the consequence of some of the things she was saying.

MM: Fierce for fun, and later fierce to put backbone in her team.

LA: The British delegation had dinner the night before. After dinner, we talked around the subject, and the Prime Minister said that she was not prepared to reduce the rebate below 70%, 70% was the absolute bottom, and if anybody so much as whispered anything less than 70%, I mean a fate worse than death would be on you. And then the following morning, the first meeting of the day was with President Mitterrand, and she agreed 66% - the final concession had to be given by her, and by nobody else. And that was the only way in which it would be accepted as final.

MM: France had a new president by then, François Mitterrand. His closest adviser later wrote that at the critical meeting Mrs Thatcher broke like glass on the edge of tears – she wanted a settlement. It was, he said, an astonishing spectacle.

LA: She tried everything. She tried all the techniques, she was quite good at that, quite good at that.

MM: (*speaking over*) Even tears.

LA: Even tears.

MT: Last night I . . . didn't think we'd get it, and I was very down in the dumps indeed, because what they were offering was way below anything we could have accepted.

MM: But the relationship with Mitterrand was rather special. He said Mrs Thatcher had the mouth of Marilyn Monroe, and the eyes of Caligula. Lord Hannay thinks this awkward admiration was mutual.

LH: The first time he came to visit her at Chequers, I'd gone down to brief her, and I thought I was going to have to sit and go over all the detail of the budget and so on like that before he came. And not at all, she was dashing around saying, 'Do you think he'll feel the cold, shall I open this window?' (*laughter in voice*) You know, 'Do you think he'll be comfortable here' and so on. And I realised then that there was an interesting relationship in a way between them. They, they had a . . . a sneaking admiration for each other.

MM: Her private secretary and trusted foreign policy adviser Charles Powell, Lord Powell, thinks she had little reason for tears, every reason to feel triumphant.

LORD POWELL: You have to remember that Fontainebleau was the culmination of five years of intensive work, detailed work where she had been rebuffed time after time by the other European leaders, but had persisted, had demanded she get a hearing, demanded that our case be heard.

MM: What did she say to you when it was over?

LP: She said, 'Thank god it's over, but we've won.'

NEWSREADER: In the last few minutes, we've heard that a compromise is now under serious discussion. A British official is quoted as saying 'We've made much progress, we're very close to an agreement.'

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, are you satisfied with this agreement you got in Fontainebleau today?

MT: Yes, I think taken all-round it's a very satisfactory agreement for Britain, and we not only got the agreement on the 66% refund, but also we got the previous sum, which they'd withheld unblocked, you know it was 750 . . .

MM: *(speaking over)* Five years is a long time to wait for victory. Her frustration, her resentment, her spirited defiance seeped into the national mood. Or simply struck a national chord.

ROWEN ATKINSON: Why must you always be looking for complex economic answers? We want to bleed your crummy little island until it dies of anaemia. *(laughter from audience)* Don't think for one moment we've forgotten Agincourt, oh no, or the battle of Waterloo, or the mess you made of our beaches, or Sandy Shore winning the Eurovision Song Contest.

MM: Because of personality, style and circumstance, Mrs Thatcher had established in the minds of politicians and public Europe as a place where you do battle, where dragons are slayed and famous victories won against the odds. But this, remember, had been a battle about the bill, not about Britain's place in Europe, about the cost of membership, not the course of history. So perhaps it wasn't so odd that her next move was enthusiastic endorsement of a decisive step forward towards a more integrated Europe – the Single Market.

LP: Winning at Fontainebleau gave her a rather more positive view of the European Union, for a while anyway. She thought she had won a great victory, and that had given us, as it were, a new impetus in Europe. It was then that she began to turn her attention much more to the single market, something she really wanted to see achieved in Europe.

MM: But it was the Single Market that was behind all those harmonisations – non-bendy bananas and the other supposed rules from Brussels. Enter, stage left, behind this drive a new *bête noire* for Mrs Thatcher – Jacques Delors, the French socialist president of the Commission, with a mission to forge a real European Union through more and more integration. Theirs was not a marriage made in heaven. Lord Hannay.

LH: Since I was the interface between Thatcher and Delors, I often had some quite difficult times. He came to Number Ten to have the normal pre-Council discussion between the President of the Commission and the President of the Council, Margaret Thatcher, and then at the end of it she gave a . . . press conference.

LP: She quite forgot the President of the Commission was sitting beside her on the platform, ignored him throughout and he never got any questions. And at the very end she said, 'Oh, so sorry, you're there, do you want to say anything?'

LH: I'm afraid to say she behaved really quite badly. And Delors was absolutely furious but didn't say a word. And then at the end she said, 'Ah yes, Monsieur Delors is here with me, he's one of the strong silent ones.' I didn't think that was going to be forgiven very easily.

MM: The stage was set for something new: the Prime Minister's most explicit rejection yet of the direction the European Union was taking. But it wasn't yet, wasn't ever a rejection of membership itself, as Prime Minister 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie', did not want 'out, out, out'. Mrs Thatcher stood on the verge of a full-throated rejection of the way Europe was going, but she also stood on rapidly shifting ground. France was about to be replaced by the spectre of a united Germany as her main foe. And very soon these battles abroad would lead to fatal fractures at home, which would haunt the Conservative party for a generation. All this and the role shepherd's pie played in that critical speech – Mrs Thatcher as heroine of the Eurosceptic resistance battling her own cabinet to the end next time on 'Brexit: A Love Story?'

## 4. From Bruges to Bust

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JOURNALIST: I'm standing at the Berlin Wall, at the spot where the breach has been made .  
..

MM: It was a time of change, a time of upheaval.

JAMES NAUGHTIE: The Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, is to resign. She will step down as . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) The Iron Lady fell as a new Europe was being born, their fate intertwined.

JOURNALIST: A huge cheer goes up as the first of the East Berliners come across to the West  
...

MM: (*speaking over*) The fall of the wall raised a promise for some, but a spectre for Mrs Thatcher – a united Germany leading a Europe bound for ever-closer union, with even a currency of its very own. She had one response to it all:

MARGARET THATCHER: No, no, no.

MM: The fight *with* Europe became a fight *over* Europe at home. In her own cabinet, her own party, and a fatal one at that. Caroline Slocock was one of her private secretaries who saw the passions close up.

CAROLINE SLOCOCK: You know, in a way it's a kind of love story, but it's a love story that went wrong, you know. Getting at each other's throats, and finally the knife in the back. And, of course, the Conservative party has never properly healed since, I think John Major referred to those 'bastards', famously. And I'd say that those bastards are arguably still around.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' There's a question mark there, a big one. Was the UK's relationship with Europe ever really amorous, ever less than a lukewarm marriage of convenience? We'll be examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, asking if the future was written in the past. Sometimes looking at those moments under odd lights and at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now. By 1989 Mrs Thatcher could bask in the glow of battles won, over the budget, over the Single Market, but basking was perhaps not her style, and the European Commission had ambitions she could not abide. Her most trusted advisor and private secretary Charles Powell.

CHARLES POWELL: The Foreign Office had tried for several years to get Margaret Thatcher to address the College of Europe in Bruges, but the letters became increasingly piteous really and pleading for her to do it, you know, 'Even Queen Julianna of the Netherlands has done it.' And so, in a moment of weakness, I think, I put it to her, and she agreed.

MM: In this case 'the Foreign Office' was David Hannay, now Lord Hannay, then the very pro-European UK ambassador to the EU. It seemed such a good idea at the time.

LORD HANNAY: It is always wise to remember the things you've got really badly wrong. And that idea was that after all the bloodshed over the budget rebate, and the difficult negotiation over the Single European Act, it was time we stopped appearing so negative, because we had plenty of positive things to say. And so I persuaded her to take on this speech at the College d'Europe in Bruges, and it blew up in my face.

MT: If you believe some of the things said and written about my views on Europe, it must seem rather like inviting Genghis Khan to speak on the virtues of peaceful coexistence! Britain does not dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community.

MM: Charles Powell had the job of melding Foreign Office pieties with ministerial pungency – sometimes on the Downing Street carpet.

LP: She had to have a draft. And she then had to disassemble the draft and spread it all over the floor in separate pages, and put this page before that page, and arrows and all sorts of things. So it could be a tiresome, painstaking business going on late at night, with the additional suffering that she very kindly used to offer to cook some supper – shepherd's pie usually accompanied the speechwriting with poor Denis then left to do the washing up.

MM: The Bruges speech became the founding text of the Eurosceptic creed, a rejection of any move towards a United States of Europe.

LP: It was never intended to be a great attack on Europe. In fact she's very explicit in it, she says we are 'fully members of, of Europe and we want it to succeed and develop, but this is what it's got to do in order for that to happen.' And I have to say, if they had become the agenda of the European Union, it would be a far better institution today than it is.

MT: We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.

NIGEL LAWSON: I remember there was an early draft which was very much tougher.

MM: The Chancellor at the time was Nigel Lawson.

NL: The one she gave was tough enough. But that was, actually, to some extent, Charles Powell, who persuaded her to soften it, but it was still quite tough.

MT: To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve. Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality.

NL: The softening was undone because her press secretary, Bernard Ingham, briefed the British press on the basis of the original draft. So (*fragment of word, or word unclear*) (*laughter in voice*) his briefing was very much tougher.

MM: The Bruges Speech was important in its militancy – the first time a senior British politician in a position of power told the Masters of the European project 'So far and no further'. It was not, not yet, 'in or out', but the struggle had begun, between Mrs Thatcher's full-blooded resistance to further integration and the view of others in the Cabinet that more Europe had to be wittingly accepted in the national interest. The tug of war which would define British politics for the next generation began here. It all blew up as some European



leaders were devising the biggest, boldest idea yet to drive further European integration: baby steps towards what became the euro – one money for the whole of the European Economic Community. In the jargon of the time, the project for a single currency was known as Economic and Monetary Union. The Chancellor wasn't keen. But Nigel Lawson recognised the argument of colleagues that Britain didn't want to be stuck on the outside of this grand undertaking peering in.

NL: The Foreign Office view always is we must be in the room.

MM: To stay in the room there were various proposals short of full monetary union. The debates of the time are littered with initials like EMU, the ECU, hard or otherwise, EMS, and phrases like 'shadowing the Deutschmark' which now have the whiff of obscure theology. But, if this was a question of angels and pinheads, the pins had very sharp points. Critically there was another acronym, the ERM, the Exchange Rate Mechanism, a way of linking the value of all currencies in the EEC. The Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe and Chancellor, Nigel Lawson wanted to join, their boss didn't.

JOURNALIST: Mrs Thatcher has got all Europe guessing stop she arrived in Madrid this evening amid reports that she was about to modify her attitude to the European Monetary System. She's under intense pressure from her own ministers . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) The critical summit in Spain in the June of 1989 had been called to decide on progress towards the single currency. The two most powerful men in the Cabinet threatened to resign if Britain didn't show willing. Lord Lawson, as he now is, is adamant that for him it was about controlling inflation, not joining in this latest European project.

NL: Geoffrey Howe had said to Margaret, this was at a meeting that we had in Number Ten, the three of us, and he said, 'Look, if you don't agree at Madrid to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, then I will resign.' I didn't think he would, so I said, because I thought I ought to give him some support, because I did think for other reasons it was right to join, I said, 'Well, if Geoffrey resigns, then I will have to resign. But, of course, he chose not to resign, so . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) Did you feel you'd been rather jumped into that, pushed into that?

NL: I didn't have to say that, but it did take her by surprise.

MM: This was a threat of political assassination: a double resignation by the two most senior Cabinet ministers would be hard for any prime minister to survive. Charles Powell said it had a huge impact.

LP: So we had this slightly absurd European summit in Madrid, and she, with me and Bernard Ingham, we were interred in one part of the hotel, Geoffrey Howe and his delegation in another, and emissaries occasionally appeared asking if they could see what she was proposing to say the next morning, and . . .

MM: But two hostile camps within the government?

LP: (*speaking over*) Two hostile camps, yes. It showed how deep the split went on some of these European issues. It was quite dramatic.

NL: It was very embarrassing, very awkward, very unpleasant. The idea was to get her to move. Instead, of course, it made her even more adamant, although she did move to a limited extent.

JOURNALIST: Mrs Thatcher revealed her hand just before lunch. She said the pound would join the EMS once inflation had been significantly reduced and once capital controls in Europe have been lifted. Her tone was much more positive than it's been in the past (*fades out*)

LP: (*speaking over*) I remember, when we were back in London, I suppose it was the next day or a day or two afterwards, ministers were outside the Cabinet Room, waiting for Cabinet to start, and she came down the stairs and glared at them all and said, 'No resignations I see.'

MM: Just four months later, at the end of October 1989, Lawson did resign. The Iron Lady's armour was beginning to crack, and it wasn't just in Downing Street, where what once seemed improbable began to look inevitable.

JOURNALIST: I'm standing on top of the Berlin Wall, which, for years, has been the most potent symbol of the division of Europe. And there can be few better illustrations of the changes which are sweeping across this continent than the party which is taking place here on top of it tonight.

MM: Mrs Thatcher, of course, welcomed the fall of the Communist wall.

MT: I watched the scenes on television last night, and again this morning, because I felt one ought not only to hear about them but see them, because you see the joy on people's faces, and you see what freedom means to them (*fades out*)

MM: But she felt a lot less joy about what the new Europe might look like. West Germany's Chancellor Kohl, already a big figure in every way, was looming even larger. He had a fierce desire to bring his country and East Germany together again, to create a new united Germany. Mrs Thatcher resisted what some saw as the tide of history. There was already a hint of what would be a very British enthusiasm, which would carry the seeds of Brexit to these shores. But for now her worry was a new Germany at the heart of a new Europe, and politicians with ambitions to unite more than just their own country. Mrs Thatcher was intensely suspicious and summoned some top academic experts to Chequers.

TIMOTHY GARTON ASH: She was actually terrific fun, because she was *absolutely* laying down the law, but you could push back.

MM: Timothy Garton Ash, now Professor of European studies at Oxford, was one of those around the table.

TGA: Her mental clock had, in a way, stopped in 1940. The Germans were bad, the French were defeated, the rest of continental Europe had folded, we stood alone. But equally important was the fact that she felt bullied by Helmut Kohl. Several times she said (*fragment of word, or word unclear*) 'You did not see Helmut' at this or that summit. And the truth is, I think, she had been handbagged by Helmut Kohl.

MM: Charles Powell was diligently taking notes. His memo after this meeting reads like a masterclass for those who humbly served politicians, while gently guiding them towards their better angels. It begins with an alphabetical list of supposed abiding components of the German character, most reflecting Mrs T's own analysis: thanks to, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, ecotourism, inferiority complex, sentimentality. Caroline Slocock remembers well the boss's view of Germans.

CS: She once talked to me about Germany over a drink and I was really surprised. She was saying that it's the national character, you know, these were the people who sent Jews to the gas chambers, you know, and that character hasn't changed. You can't trust them. And she

instanced, and I thought rather ridiculously, the fact that Germans don't queue as an example of that kind of, you know, weakness. So there were deep emotional roots. But of course, the European project is there to stop this happening again. But I think she was very worried about German reunification.

MM: To some senior ministers, Mrs Thatcher's attitude to Germany revealed her as stuck in the past, denying destiny, and they would have to drag her down history's road, or simply drag her down. What sharpened the pain of her defeat over reunification was that the French and Italian price for supporting coal was the first practical steps towards the euro. Her new Chancellor, John Major, was in a powerful position. His persuasion succeeded where resignation threats had failed. Mrs Thatcher agreed that Britain should join the ERM. But her struggle against the direction of travel went on. Talk of a United States of Europe, and a proposal that the European Parliament should get more power brought forth this response:

MT: No, no, no.

MM: That was her attitude towards the single currency too, and John Major's quest for alternatives – the row was about to deliver another blow.

NEWSREADER: In a dramatic resignation speech, Sir Geoffrey Howe has told MPs of the profound differences between himself and Mrs Thatcher over Europe. He accused (*fades out*)

MM: Geoffrey Howe's resignation letter warned of the risks of foot-dragging on the project, which became the euro: that they were severe, it would be a tragedy to rule it out, and the mood Thatcher struck undermined British influence. Europe was not the only factor in her downfall, but it was now at the heart of the battle-lines in the party. Caroline Slocock says Mrs Thatcher felt under siege, from the enemy without and the enemy within.

CS: I think she probably felt disparaged by the way in which she was treated by the European leaders and isolated, and I think in relation to her Foreign Secretary and her Chancellor who'd both ganged up, I mean, I just think she felt . . . constantly bullied.

MM: It's not the way that history sees her so far, as being bullied?

CS: I think that history's been largely written by men.

MM: When she felt four votes short of avoiding a second round in the leadership contest, she was at a summit in Paris, putting on a brave face in public.

JAMES NAUGHTIE: (*interrupting a broadcast*) John, John, I'm, I'm stopping you now, because we're going straight over to Paris where Huw Edwards is waiting outside the British Ambassador's residence, Huw.

MT: . . . ballot, so I confirm it is my intention to let my name go forward for the second ballot.

HUW EDWARDS: Isn't the . . . isn't the vote against you, Mrs Thatcher, large enough for you to have to acknowledge that you no longer enjoy the confidence of the party?

MT: I have got more than half the votes of the parliamentary party, it was not . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) But it wasn't enough. Charles Powell was by her side, or rather just behind her, as she was told the result.

LP: We were sitting in her bedroom, waiting to get the news. And she was sitting at the dressing table. I was over behind on . . . a bed, and looking, I could see her face reflected in the dressing room mirror. And then it came through, and I remember, Peter Morrison said, 'Oh dear, Prime Minister, it's not as good as we thought it would be,' and I can tell you . . . from her expression then, she knew that was it.

MM: Back in Downing Street she called her senior ministers and advisors together.

CS: I went into the Cabinet, expecting to see an historic moment, but what I saw was she trying to read out her very short resignation statement, and just . . . breaking down in tears. And then, when she'd finished, she said, 'I don't think you will have heard that, so I'll read it again.' And she went through the same process of sobbing and crying and, you know, getting to the end, I just felt such sympathy for her. And I think her tears were partly shock, certainly distress, but I also think that she was angry, and I think betrayal hung in the air.

MM: Hers would be the first big scalp claimed by the row over Europe, it wouldn't be the last. The Tory civil war began here, Mrs Thatcher drew the battle-lines, stuck the standard in the ground, around which the ranks of future rebels would rally. During the 80s, Mrs Thatcher had changed the way Britain saw the European Economic Community. As its other leaders put the project on fast forward, she dug in her heels. A love affair? The Iron Lady increasingly rejected these unwelcome advances, proposing an unwanted union. She may have avoided civil war, but drew the battle-lines, stuck the standard in the ground, around which the ranks of future rebels would rally. (*sic – note that is very similar to the beginning of this section – first he says, 'civil war began here', but then 'avoided civil war' – seems one was included in error*). Not next time, but the time after, we'll be looking at the first angry battle in that civil war, when Mrs Thatcher's last Chancellor, John Major, was Prime Minister and faced the Maastricht rebels. But before that we're stepping to one side to take a look at the role the press played in moulding the British mood – 'Up yours Delors' next time on 'Brexit: A Love Story?'

## 5. Up Yours Delors!

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*(bell rings, sound of machinery)*

MM: The print was changing. From the days when the power of the press was a physical thing. With those noisy, beautiful, ugly machines churning out the news *(sound effects stop)* changing to a cleaner, less inky means of production. And a more brutal mingling of fact and opinion.

KELVIN MACKENZIE: There was a madness, when I ran the paper, total madness. If I came in with an idea in the morning, no matter how ridiculous or bizarre, we did it.

MM: Kelvin MacKenzie, former editor of The Sun. But was it madness or political purpose? How come The Sun went from this, in 1973 . . .

ANNOUNCER: Yes, for a future together, no for a future alone.

MM: To this in 1990.

KM *(shouting)* Up Yours Delors!

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' There's a question mark there, getting bigger each episode, charting our 45 year relationship with the European project. Last time, we saw how Mrs Thatcher's rebirth of Brussels' amorous advances played a part in the downfall. Next, we'll look at how the Prime Minister who followed her, John Major, attempted to embrace further European union to the fury of some in his own party. But today, we're lightly stepping out of time, to look at the part played by the chorus – the press – hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, holding these moments up to odd lights, at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now, asking if the future was written in the past. The soaraway side-switching Sun wasn't alone. In our first referendum, the Daily Mail painted a bleak picture of life outside the Common Market.

ANNOUNCER: No coffee, wine, beans or bananas until further notice.

MM: Quite different from the question posed in 2016.

ANNOUNCER: Who will speak for England? Are we to be a self-governing nation free in this *(fades out)*

MM: Here's Ken Clarke, former Chancellor, former Home Secretary, veteran European enthusiast.

KEN CLARKE: The Daily Mail had been reassuring bourgeois Britain under a very good editor called David English. Suddenly the editor changed and along came Paul Dacre who's also an extremely good editor, a very good journalist, but he became ferociously Eurosceptic overnight, and I think suddenly the Conservative bubble, you know, the Conservative family was being exposed to unrelenting anti-European propaganda, which has been maintained ever since.

MM: How much did the unrelenting scorn towards the European project create a climate where leaving looked like an attractive option? What changed? For a start, The Sun changed hands. Bought by the Australian tycoon Rupert Murdoch in 1969.

RUPERT MURDOCH: We've a lot of ideas, they're yet to be tested, of course, and erm . . . we've got to evolve something for a daily paper, so it could be more immediate in its news I would imagine.

INTERVIEWER: Will it have any political orientation as The Sun and its predecessor the Daily Herald had?

RM: No, no fixed orientation in the sense it'll be allied to any party, certainly not, it'll be quite independent.

MM: For a while, at any rate, before politics was a priority, he wanted to blow away the cobwebs of the sometimes straitlaced British press, speak to people's passions and prejudices. For 13 years, the sons editor was Kelvin MacKenzie. He openly admits his drinking at the time makes him hazy about the details, but between 1981 and 1994, The Sun was all about cheery vulgarity.

KM: The Sun had always had a rather dim view of the French, one that . . . continues today, I suspect.

MM: The distinctive music of Granada TV's *What the Papers Say*. In 1990, they had plenty of sport with The Sun.

UNNAMED FEMALE PRESENTER: Complaints against The Sun for a two-fingered salute to the French were understood but not upheld.

UNNAMED MALE PRESENTER: The Press Council said today over its recent replay of Agincourt on the playing fields of Wapping. Actually, it's not the first time the paper has been cleared by the Press Council, but you might have thought so the way the paper announced the glad tidings on Wednesday.

ANNOUNCER: Er, Oui, er Oui, er Oui.

UMP: Don't worry, you won't need subtitles for what follows (*fades out*)

MM: If Francophobia was good fun, mocking the European Union was good politics.

KM: We'd have a long list of stories, and we'd be skipping through them, so if it said, 'Brussels decides that pistachio nuts need to be painted yellow' – 'Hey!! Whose idea was that?! Campaign! Save our pistachio nuts!' And then somebody would say, 'Good idea', and then we'd start . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) Because it's funny or because it swings the debate?

KM: (*speaking over*) Yeah, because it's funny. No, no, it's nothing to do with the debate, it cheers everybody up, and actually, most of the reporters on The Sun couldn't spell pistachio anyway, so we'd have to have some learning process, 'Well, what is a pistachio nut, why shouldn't we paint it yellow?' Is it . . . 'Ah, carcinogenic, right, Brussels are trying to kill as with nut cancer. Ahh! Another reason to get out.' And then we'd start a campaign, and then within half an hour, Brussels would announce that they weren't going to be painted yellow any more, they'd bowed to public pressure and that was the end of it. And (*word or words unclear*) 'Victory for Sun in Yellow Nut Campaign.' Wallop, bang, done it, next!

MM: 'Bish! Bash! Bosh!' was hardly the Daily Telegraph's style. Considered the Conservatives' in-house bulletin board, the debate over Europe was agonised. Max Hastings was the editor.

MAX HASTINGS: There was a perpetual bitter difference of opinion, and all the time I was trying to hold these various forces at bay. And in those days I used to have dinner with Douglas Hurd maybe once a month, who was Foreign Secretary, and Douglas said to me at dinner, 'That leader of yours in the paper this morning about Europe, it was a camel.' Now, of course, what he meant was I was trying to straddle two positions, and he was absolutely dead right. I was attempting to make the pro-European case while avoiding an absolute bust up with our anti-Europeans and our proprietor.

MM: One thing both the Telegraph and The Sun had in common was foreign bosses, powerful men who enjoyed their power – not an Australian at the Telegraph, but a Canadian, Conrad Black.

MH: Conrad are sometimes rang up at strange hours, I used to go to bed at 10:30, rain or shine, and Conrad doesn't go to bed at all, and then he doesn't get up until about 11 o'clock the next morning, so he had the time. But my wife used to say, when Conrad would ring up at inconvenient moments, 'Think of the money, think of the money.' And she was right. While I was determined to make an independent newspaper, a lot of Tories and especially the right believed that the Telegraph ought to be what it was when I took over, the party that still stuck up for hanging and apartheid, and right-wing views on Europe. And I think at the time I was dealing with so many other issues that it's only when I look back that I realise how much anger there was among the right-wingers on my own staff about our European position.

MM: If Conrad Black didn't push his view on the editor of The Telegraph, Rupert Murdoch didn't have to persuade The Sun.

KM: Rupert has always been hostile to Europe. Instinctively, he'd be against that kind of collective political decision in which 'this will be good for you', he'd be much more inclined to say, (*puts on Australian accent*) 'I don't really go along with the European idea, do you?' 'No', (*laughter in voice*) to be honest with you, you know, 'You're signing my pay check' – 'No, no, there's no question of me going along with it Rupert.' And he doesn't have to say any more, he doesn't have to say, 'Do you know, we must write an enormous headline, must pour a bucket of shit all over Europe.'

MM: The bucket was tipped consistently. But one headline stood out among all the rest.

KM: If Delors was for it, we were against it. So . . . we decided that we would . . . encourage everybody to actually go out from their school, their factory, their place of work, and just shout out 'Up Yours Delors!' Now, a more ridiculous idea I couldn't think of.

MM: Max Hastings feels, not admiration, but rueful acceptance of Murdoch's insight.

MH: Rupert's always had a view about Europe but Rupert could say that he the Australian, or now the American, has had a far better idea of what the British people thought and what the British people wanted than people like me. And in that he would be right.

MM: The Gulf War gave another opportunity to have a go. Granada's *What The Papers Say* from 1991 with Ian Hislop.

IAN HISLOP: The British, according to their newspapers this week, are more restrained about their enemies. We may be at war with Iraq, but we're agreed that we do not hate the Iraqis. No – we hate the Germans.

ANNOUNCER (*in loud voice*) Menace of the Germans!

IH: The Sun, as ever, leads the way.

ANNOUNCER: We were assured the fatherland wanted nothing more than to be a loyal ally and a dependable friend, in a marvellous new European partnership. How has that partnership worked in the Gulf? At every turn Germany has gone her own way, it's been 'Deutschland Uber Alles' and everyone else can take a jump in the Rhine.

MM: It wasn't just the Germans.

IH: Still, the Germans are nearly as bad as the Belgians.

ANNOUNCER: (*shouting*) Yellow-Belgies.

IH: As The Sun calls them. The Independent reminds us (*fades out*)

MM: (*speaking over*) But dullness crept back in, as the pivotal Maastricht summit approached. And spare a thought for the journalists who had the job of covering the European Union. The heart and soul of the British press corps in Brussels for years were husband and wife team Jacki Davies, who worked for the Daily Mail and Geoff Meade of the Press Association. I spoke to them in the shadow of the Berlaymont, the European Commission's headquarters, the origin of so many of those stories.

GEOFF MEADE: I remember when the German who was responsible for changing the food additives directive came down to explain this shock horror that had appeared in the British tabloids, that food legislation in Brussels meant that we would be banned from eating or selling prawn cocktail flavoured crisps and the Commissioner, Martin Bannerman came down to explain that he had no intention but to do good for the health of citizens and then, station, when people said, 'Well why are you banning our prawn cocktail flavoured crisps?' he just said, 'I didn't know there was such a thing in the world.'

JACKI DAVIES: Every Brussels correspondent has to find a way to get this story on air. Not an easy story, it's complicated, it can be quite dull, and so to get it on air, you have to hype it up.

MM: You're pretty, to coin a phrase, pro-European, are you . . . did you write things that you didn't believe in, that hyped it up too far?

JD: Did I write untruths? No. Was the tone . . . you can change entirely a story by the way you write it, it's much more about writing it the way your newspaper sees it.

MM: The Telegraph had its own secret weapon to ginger up the debate. In 1989, they had a new Brussels correspondent.

BORIS JOHNSON: I went to B— I think I was 24, I went to Brussels and I was the Brussels correspondent for about five years.

MM: The future Foreign Secretary was producing headlines like, 'Snails are Fish says EU' and 'Threat to British Pink Sausages', and even, 'Brussels Recruits Sniffers to Ensure that Euro-Manure smells the same.'

BJ: Right, ah, this is fantastic, it is The Clash, *Pressure Drop*.

MM: *Pressure Drop* indeed – Boris Johnson on Desert Island Discs in 2005. He was, by then, the editor of The Spectator, but looked back on the storms he caused with some relish.

BJ: There was this fantastic pressure to create a single polity to create an answer to historic German problem, and this produced the most fantastic strains in the Conservative Party. So, everything I wrote from Brussels I find was sort of . . . I was just chucking these rocks



over the garden wall and listening to this amazing crash from the greenhouse next door, over in England.

MM: Ken Clarke was sitting inside the greenhouse.

KC: He and I got on very well personally, but he drove me up the wall. Boris would turn up and send back stories which were . . . accusing me of the most outrageous betrayal of national interest in this, that or the other thing, which with great respect were at times completely invented. I mean, he's a good journalist, it was riveting stuff, but it was . . . it was propaganda.

MM: He could drive fellow correspondence up the wall as well.

GM: One day, on the front of the Daily Telegraph, a story appeared saying the Berlaymont was going to be blown up. And I saw Boris in the morning, and I said 'Boris, this story', he said, 'Oh, what do you think, old boy? Rather good.' I said, 'It's a sensational story, Boris, but I . . . I . . . you are infinitely more clever than I will ever be, but a thought occurs to me, and I don't think it's occurred to you: what is the one thing you certainly not do to a building that is full of asbestos?' And he said, 'What do you mean, old boy?' And I sort of gestured with my hands to show a building going up in clouds of smoke and asbestos raining down on the good citizens of Brussels and, no doubt, further afield. And he just paused for a minute, and he had the grace to sort of look a bit sheepish, (*fragment of word, or word unclear*) 'Ah, well spotted old boy, hadn't really thought of that one.'

JD: Boris's trick was to take something that had a grain of truth. Boris wrote a story that said they were going to knock this down, replace it with something higher than the Eiffel Tower, planes would have to be diverted round it, it would be a splendid emblem of this building of a new European superstate. I got a call saying, 'Jacki, there is this story', in those days no fax, no internet, so I said, 'Read it to me', we got to paragraph four, and I'm going, 'No, no, keep going', and they said, 'Why?' and I said, 'I'm waiting for the killer paragraph' and the killer paragraph read as follows: 'EU officials were last night said to be broadly in favour of the scheme – or something equally spectacular.' I said to my newsdesk, 'I'm afraid that means it's rubbish.' The next day, I found out why it was rubbish. There was an architect in Madrid who had read about the problems with this building, and off his own bat, written to the Commission saying, 'Dear Commission, I'm an architect and I've got this wonderful design for a fantastic building and this is what you should do.' They put it in a draw marked, 'Thank you very much and no thanks', however, when I told my newsdesk, 'Look, I've got to the bottom of this' – 'Ah, so a plan does exist,' – 'No! Not by any meaning of the word 'plan' that I know.' The next day, they did write the story, somebody had come up with (*fragment of word, or word unclear due to speaking over*)

MM: (*speaking over*) They wrote in London, because you wouldn't write it . . .

JD: (*speaking over*) They wrote it in London, because they were so keen on this idea. It was all to do with eurocrats having delusions of grandeur. So, you see, there was the grain of truth.

MM: He saw his role as a troublemaker with a comic turn of phrase, as a congenial one. That has perhaps never changed, but then, he recognised, one hard to maintain in frontline politics.

BJ: I think if I made a huge effort always to have a snappy, inspiring soundbite on my lips, I think the sheer mental strain of that would be such that I would explode and . . . I think it's

much easier, therefore, for me to try to . . . you know, play what shots I have as freely as I can. Does that make sense?

KC: Well, Boris is Boris, and he does have this incurable habit of speaking in . . . it is a slightly Donald Trump-like way, and it does lead to more than the occasional gaffe. He's a very bright guy, but he cannot stop sometimes fooling about, sometimes speaking totally spontaneously, and this creates quite a lot of problems.

GM: There's no doubt that Boris made the weather to a remarkable extent. We realised that we had a brilliant, innovative, very imaginative correspondent, and I don't think I fully understood the amount of harm that he was doing or could do. But a lot of his stories, he did get it right, and a lot of the time, the European integrationists were doing things that were bound to greatly upset the right wing in the Conservative Party, and beyond them, the British people.

MM: But how much difference did the declining newspaper industry really make to the way the British public saw the European Union?

GM: I thought that the tabloids' coverage of Europe, both then and since was deplorable, because an awful lot of it was simply lies. But, in those days, none of us saw the end game in all this, which would end with the vote for Brexit.

KC: Looking back, this sort of thing kept up for decades, had a very marked effect on right-of-centre opinion, particularly Conservative party activists, particularly as they aged, as we all do. And party leaders didn't usually upset the newspapers by responding to it particularly. Increasingly, as the years went by, pro-European arguments just weren't printed by the right-wing newspapers.

MM: There's no doubting the power of the press to mould attitudes, create general impressions, but perhaps it wasn't enough on its own to forge political change.

KM: Then along came Nigel Farage, suddenly he spoke to that tabloid agenda, he says things that are acceptable but which strike a chord in ordinary people. And suddenly, Cameron bows at the knee, he would have never, never, never have bowed at the knee to a Sun headline. It was the politics of the moment, there was somebody who looked as though he was going to rob the Conservative party of a good chunk of votes, therefore something had to be done.

MM: In the 90s Mr Farage was still an unknown city trader. We'll come back to his role as possibly the man who turned a far-fetched dream of junking the whole relationship into hard fact. But if Mrs Thatcher had sounded the alarm, identifying Brussels as an encroaching, interfering spectre, the British press kept it ringing in our ears, a constant background noise, establishing her fears as a commonplace truth, creating a climate in congenial for politicians who did have little love left for the European project. Next, will return to a time when that project was getting bigger and bolder, few were talking about walking out, but rebellion was in the air. Resistance to the plan became the very meat and drink of Westminster politics. The idea of another referendum was floated for the first time in 20 years. Europe forced another Prime Minister to resign – for a few days anyway. Major, Maastricht and a bunch of Bastard's, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 6. Major's Bastards and the Battle of Maastricht

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NEWSREADER: The road to Europe's future, the meeting to decide where to go next.

MARK MARDELL: Many a European city has given its name to a battle or a treaty. Maastricht was both.

JOURNALIST: The leaders and top ministers from the 12 nations are trying to thrash out an agreement that will shape the future of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

MM: A pitched, furious battle within the Conservative party over a treaty. A time of rage and resistance. This is how Newsnight's young political editor saw it.

MARK MARDELL (*archive*) The Maastricht rebellion is no hole in the wall affair, the organisation is formidable. To government loyalists, the single-mindedness is frightening, particularly when the government has a majority of just 19.

MM: Well said, young Mardell. The cabinet minister, Welsh Secretary John Redwood, wasn't at all dismayed by the rebellion.

JOHN REDWOOD: I was very happy that some people were rebelling and it would have suited me fine if Parliament, in its wisdom, had decided that they didn't like the Maastricht Treaty.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' In this episode, that question is answered by someone with a big, fat negative. Those Conservatives who made their stand, demanding the relationship should not go any further, flinging themselves into a fratricidal fray, against the authority of the Prime Minister, rather than be dragged to the altar of ever closer union. We're examining some snapshots from our 45 year relationship with the European project, hearing the inside story by those who were there at the critical points. Sometimes holding these moments up at odd angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now, asking if the future was written in the past. The early 90s were a momentous, pivotal point in the UK is relationship with Europe. How could they not be? It was when *Eurotrash* first went on the air.

MARIA MCERLANE: Tonight, on *Eurotrash* we've got dildos on a stick, we've got crap in a cup, and we've got Sabrina in a swimming pool.

MM: Channel 4's *Eurotrash* charted the more outré aspects of our continental cousins' lives. Not a treaty in sight, often not a stitch of clothing either.

MARIA MCERLANE: It was basically a sort of jokey look at how other European countries lived.

MM: Maria McErlane was the voice of *Eurotrash*.

MARIA MCERLANE: It was never meant to be anything . . . highbrow, shall we say, it was very much after the pub on a Friday evening, there would be, invariably, women with their bosoms out and strange Germans doing something . . . normally to do with bodily functions. And it was a gentle look at otherness.

MM: Oh, and 1992 was also the less-than-gentle year of Maastricht. We'll get to that in a moment, first let me introduce Peter Lilley, a man who'll later on get called a Bastard by his boss. Now a keen Brexiteer, he was then a sceptic in the Cabinet. Mind you, he's been on quite a journey.

PETER LILLEY: I had actually been recruited to campaign in favour of membership in the 1975 referendum. I plead as an excuse that I was recruited by the secretary of the Britain in Europe movement, who was an extremely beautiful girl, who I subsequently married, so I did very well out of Europe once . . .

MM: (*interrupting*) I have to ask, has she changed her mind?

PL: She has, and she's much more hostile now than I am.

MM: Maastricht eventually gave him a bit of a dilemma, but even before a single European leader had set foot in that Dutch city, there were fears that this would be a treaty too far. John Major was now Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher was far from just another supportive backbencher.

MARGARET THATCHER: In my day that would have required the occasional use of the handbag. (*laughter*)

MM: John Major took over from Mrs T intending to distance himself from her hostile tone, declaring he wanted to be at Europe's heart, not swinging a bat at its box. Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Lilley, didn't think Europe needed another treaty.

PL: John Major, at the beginning, to prepare our negotiating position, asked each Minister to rate the issues that were coming up in the treaty, 'A' meant 'positively desirable', 'B' meant 'not desirable, but we could live with it', and 'C' meant 'unacceptable'. So, we all went off, and from the point of view of our own department came back, and reported to the Cabinet. And I was struck that there was no 'A's, there was nothing in the treaty that anyone positively wanted.

MM: Ken Clarke was then Home Secretary.

KC: We all agreed, as a compromise that we would go in for the treaty, but we'd actually seek an opt-out on the single currency and on the social chapter. John had a triumphant negotiation, came back with the opt-outs, was praised by hardline Eurosceptics like Teddy Taylor on the floor of the House, and it was really a non-event.

MM: But Maastricht was a big diplomatic deal. It created the European Union, and gave it a huge new goal, the euro. Other aims were almost as ambitious: a common foreign policy, closer police cooperation, it created European citizens and gave them new rights to live and move freely within the EU. John Major fought hard, he won an agreement from the other 11 countries that the UK wouldn't have to take part in the euro or the social chapter – workers' rights and so on. Former Conservative minister, by then an enthusiastic pro-European backbencher, Edwina Currie, saw that as part of the problem.

EDWINA CURRIE: I think the big issue about the Maastricht deal was it was presented as how we could opt out of everything. It seems as if, immediately, we were very, very reluctant members of it. The fact was, at the time, I think there were about 26 rebels in the House of Commons, which of course is more than the Tory majority in 1992, but it wasn't a huge number, they were outnumbered more than 10 times by members who had been elected on a pro-European stance. So, it really did feel rather odd, it felt as if the ground was being shifted from under our feet.

MM: What happened between Ken Clarke's non-event and the ground shifting under Edwina Currie's feet? A referendum. That's right. Not the first or last we'll be hearing about

one of *those*. Even in this episode. The Danish people rejected the Maastricht treaty in a referendum by 50.7%

KC: If it hadn't been for the Danish referendum, nobody would have bothered about it. I mean, let's face it, as you and I sit here now, most of the people who got themselves beside themselves with passions over Maastricht couldn't now quickly remember quite what we were arguing about. And looking back at some of the debates, they were obscure and ridiculous.

UNNAMED SPEAKER: Having had a look at 189b, I've come to the conclusion it is far too complicated actually to work, and if they're going to have (*fades out*)

KC: Maastricht dominated the life of the 1992-97 government in a totally destructive way. So far as the political bubble was concerned, everything was about these daft arguments about Maastricht. (*bell rings*)

MM: We were interrupted there by the Division Bell, signalling a vote in the House of Commons. So was the major government interrupted night after night the bell tolled. The French narrowly won their referendum on Maastricht, 51% was regarded as a 'petite oui' the Danes were thrown some concessions, voted again in another referendum and toed the line. We're talking mainly about our relationship with the rest of the EU here, but trawling through the archive, this 1992 BBC documentary *Talking Politics* really struck me.

ANNOUNCER: This year, ordinary people, all round Europe have been taking every opportunity to cock a snook at their governments. John Gray of Jesus College Oxford.

JOHN GRAY: There is not trust in the democratic credentials of the emerging European superstate, that appeared to be on the horizon, say five years ago, and in particular its seen as a steamroller of differences in national political cultures, and is therefore suspected.

MM: If the fires on the continent had been doused, the British rebels were still aflame.

EC: I think there were something like 74 three line whips when (*laughter in voice*) we had to all turn up, and we were kept dancing on hot coals all the time. We had a group called the Positive European Group, that's backbenchers, we used to meet fairly regularly, so if we went in to see the Prime Minister and, bless him, he said, 'No, I want Britain at the heart of Europe, I'm totally with you, I'm so glad you've formed this group to help us get the legislation through Parliament', and then I bumped into Teddy Taylor, one of the Eurosceptics outside and he said, 'Oh well, the Prime Minister's with us', and I said, 'How do you know?', he said, 'We went in to see him, and he said, "I'm the biggest Eurosceptic in the cabinet",' (*laughs*) And Teddy and I looked at each other and said, 'This won't do, this won't do.' You could tear your hair out – we did.

PL: It was hairy at occasions. I can remember one time the Chief Whip reporting that he couldn't guarantee that we could win the . . . vote, and afterwards I had to stay behind and talk to John Major about something else and he said, you know, 'What do you think of all this?' and I said, 'Isn't it exciting' – and he looked at me as if I was made, probably correctly, since he'd never seemed to enjoy the process. But . . . I've always found excitement exciting.

MM: Those in charge of parliamentary discipline, the whips, developed a camaraderie of the trenches, deploying skills ranging from chum, to psychotherapist, to inquisitor. Their legend, part of their armoury.

MM (*Archive*): One new MP who unwisely signed a motion . . .

MM: This is from a documentary I made at the time.

MM (*Archive*) . . . tells of being approached by a whip who put a heavy arm around him and with every appearance of friendliness said, 'We've got a nickname for you in the whips' office' – 'What is it?' asked the new boy. The whip spat a four-letter expletive, and turned on his heel.

MM: In the middle of these polar nights of endless rebellion, something darker still intruded. Black Wednesday, when The UK was ejected from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, which John Major had pretty much forced Mrs Thatcher to join. The next year, the excitement in Westminster got as exciting as it could get. The rebels defeated the government.

SPEAKER: The ayes to the right, 314, the noes to the left, 292 (*cheers*)

MM: Labour's Dennis Skinner pointed out the obvious.

DENNIS SKINNER: In view of the fact that the Prime Minister and nearly every leading Cabinet Minister stated their position at Harrogate at the weekend that they would deliver the votes on Maastricht, shouldn't the right and proper thing now to be for this government to resign?

MM: John Major did hold and win that confidence vote. It seemed to have no confidence left in himself. Wounded, diminished, suffering the slow torment of a death by a thousand cuts, each cruel, slicing (*sic?*) weakening him, his authority leaking away. The very day he won that vote, the bitterness overflowed after a TV interview. The cameras were off, the mics should have been dead, but they were still recording.

MICHAEL BRUNSON (*ITN Political Editor*) But where do you think most of this poison's come from?

MM: In the off-the-record chat, John Major is asked when he doesn't sack dissident cabinet ministers.

JOHN MAJOR (*faintly*) . . . going around causing all sorts of trouble, we don't want another three more of the bastards out there.

MM: His answer: 'We don't want another three more of the bastards out there'.

PL: I think I heard about it on the BBC. But fairly soon after I started getting phone calls from people, and whereas reports were that there were three people labelled 'bastards', the number of phone calls I got from people saying, 'We must stand together, we bastards' was greater than three – in other words people saw it as a badge of honour.

JR: Number Ten was usually very full of advice on what it was appropriate for me to say about things, and so I rang them up and said what would they like me to say about this, and they said they didn't have any suggestion. So I then said, 'Well, could I say that a mistake has been made and the Prime Minister didn't say this about me', they said, 'No, you can't say that', so I then said, 'Well . . . can I say that it's sort of been misconstrued, and play it down?' and they said, 'No, you can't say that.' So, I put the phone down, because I realised I was on my own. And so I went out onto the steps, and when I was asked the obvious question I just said, 'I wish to scotch these rumours, my parents married several years before I was born.'

MM: All this high euro-drama, all the potential for satire, and *Eurotrash* didn't once touch the politics of it all. (*extracts from Eurotrash, nothing meaningful*) The Westminster hijinks were of huge importance, but didn't really reach far into the public imagination. Maria McErlane

MARIA MCERLANE: You have to remember this was, you know, post-Thatcher, and we had John Major who was seen as the grey man, and I do think in those times, all those many, many, many years ago, people weren't as politically switched on. So yes, the Maastricht rebels, there were some people that he called bastards and everything, but I don't think the majority of people cared one jot.

MM: The Maastricht vote was in the bag, but the future shape of Europe was still a subject of fevered argument. The party conference of 1994 was especially torrid. (*Newsnight theme*)

JEREMY PAXMAN: Europe is the scab the Conservatives just cannot stop picking. At the point the party thought that it had (*fades out*)

MM: The sacked former Chancellor Norman Lamont, Mrs Thatcher sitting alongside him, raised the flag of rebellion and inch or two higher.

NORMAN LAMONT: It has recently been said that the option of leaving the Community is unthinkable. I believe that this attitude is rather simplistic.

MM: John Major was not tempered by the fire, every further burn seemed to leave him more sensitive, writhing inside. By 22 June 1995, he'd had enough.

NEWSREADER: John Major resigns as leader of the Conservative Party, and challenges his party critics to fight him for the top job.

JOHN MAJOR: I'm no longer prepared to tolerate the present situation. In short, it is time to put up or shut up.

PL: Well, I was down at Ascot, when I suddenly received a phone call to phone Michael Howard. And he told me what John Major was planning to do, and said it would become public in an hour's time or something. I went back and saw my wife, and said we'd better go off and think about this. If there's going to be an election, should there be a candidate for leadership who would take a different line on this whole Maastricht business? And should it be me? We will do that over for a few minutes, and decided no, it shouldn't be me, and I went back in and was (*word unclear*) surrounded by the editors of most of the major newspapers who knew none of this and just waited till it came up on the screen, and looked serene when they expressed surprise, and we indicated full knowledge.

MM: John Redwood *did* resign.

JR: It was a very easy decision, because I realised that we weren't the promise on the euro but I, I'd been expecting, and I also got to the point where, outside my own department, I found a lot of things we were doing were irritating me, and so I thought, 'Well, I will be better off being free to express my views from the backbenches,' and I felt a great burden lifting the moment I announced that I could no longer accept collective responsibility.

MM: John Major won, but never before had a Prime Minister been forced to resign as party leader while in office. Never before had the party been so ungovernable. Never before had Europe so divided the party.

EC: He seemed to be so incapable of drawing all the groups together and getting a compromise. He seemed to be *pleading* for us all to support him. Whereas we were pleading for him to support one side of the other, and to make quite clear what the policy was. And he did not seem to be capable of doing that, mainly, I think, because he just wanted to be liked.

MM: John Redwood says this period was when the scales dropped from many Conservative eyes.

JR: For the first time, those of us on the Eurosceptic side could demonstrate that it wasn't just a Common Market, it wasn't the Common Market people had voted for in 1975, it was, as some of us had warned from very early days, a much huger scheme, and we felt that, at the point where they wanted, to put through Maastricht, we needed to have that big, open debate, to see if the British public really welcomed this major change in the direction of the EU as they saw it.

MM: To the end, Major was left pleading.

JM: Whether you agree with me or disagree with me, like me or loathe me, don't bind my hands when I am negotiating on behalf of the British nation.

MM: His hands? Major had been tied in knots by this love story gone sour. Perhaps the rebels had put country before party, perhaps they'd displayed a careless lack of discipline after 18 years in power. The poisonous row over our relationship with the European Union had sapped the Conservatives of strength, drained their ability, perhaps even their desire to govern. Europe had already helped bring down the most important post-war Conservative Prime Minister, now it had become radioactive – a row that had the potential to undermine any leader, keep them out of power, destroy any Conservative Prime Minister. Certainly, they had to wait a long time before another one came along, until 2010 when David Cameron became Prime Minister, and perhaps he should have paid more heed to the warnings from the past. But in the 90s Maastricht had been a row inside the ruling party, for political obsessives which plucked few heartstrings among the general population. Next time, the European row that encompassed the devastation of the British countryside, the cruel death of children, and the roast beef of Old England – mad cow, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'



## 7. Major and the Mad Cows

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SONG: *When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food it enobled our veins and enriched our blood, our soldiers are brave and our courtiers were good, oh the roast beef of Old England, and old English roast beef.*

MARK MARDELL: But defending the potentially diseased roast beef of Old England led to a new low in our relationship with the rest of the European Union.

NEWSREADER: A mysterious brain disease is threatening the country's cows. Scientists don't know what's causing it, or where it came from, but they are worried.

MM: There was an ugly name for an ugly episode – Mad Cow Disease. The TV pictures were apocalyptic - dying, infected cows, staggering around farms. The government placing huge faith in the scientific verdict they desperately wanted to believe: that infected beef couldn't kill people. The Prime Minister, John Major, thought Europe had overreacted.

JOHN MAJOR: I hope people can push aside some of the hysteria that they've heard, it's not all that *(fades out)*

CHRISTINE LORD: He was on morphine, and his breathing got really bad, and it filled the house, as he was gasping for every last breath. He didn't have cancer, it wasn't riddling his body, he was a fit healthy young guy, apart from what was going on in his brain. But when the brain gets punched through with so many holes, the body doesn't know how even to open and shut their eyes, so Andrew had the death rattle that went on and on for a few days. But I held his hand, and then he took one last breath, and then he opened his eyes and he was gone. *(three second pause)* And *(two second pause)* that will haunt me till the day I die. You know, Andrew asked me to find out who had done it to him. And also to make sure it didn't happen to anybody else.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: A Love Story?' That question mark has been getting bigger every episode, as our relationship with the European Union generated into constant sniping, was it inevitable that this lukewarm marriage of convenience would end in divorce? We've been examining some snapshots from our 45 year relationship with the European project, hearing the inside story told by those who were there asking if the past was pregnant with the present. The Beef War of 1996 took place after the bitter internal Conservative battles over the Maastricht Treaty, but it has tendrils that stretch back into the past and reach into the future.

JOURNALIST : When did you first realise that there was something not entirely right with her?

FARMER: Well, I noticed that she was starting to go thin, just her . . . attitude changed, wilder.

FAMER TWO: The cows were showing signs of extreme nervousness on concrete, they were very unsteady on their legs.

MM: Those cows were dying from Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy – BSE. The government banned beef offal and congratulated themselves: this was extreme caution, because the science suggested it probably, *probably* couldn't be caught by people. Their general message, 'British beef was safe' encapsulated by Agriculture Secretary, John Gummer, with his little daughter Cordelia, at an agricultural show.

JOURNALIST: The Agriculture Minister, John Gummer, today enrolled his daughter, Cordelia, in his campaign to persuade people that eating beef is safe.

MM: He bought a burger from a van and gave it to the small girl, who appeared to recoil in horror.

JOURNALIST: It was a little hot for her.

JOURNALIST 2: It's too hot?!

J: But later, he munched it himself to prove to the world that he at least is confident there's nothing to worry about.

SIR RICHARD PACKER: She burnt herself on the burger, because they gave it to her too quickly. The reason she spat it out was it was too hot. But it made wonderful television.

MM: Sir Richard Packer was the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture from 1993 to 2000. He said at the time Gummer's stunt didn't seem so outlandish.

RP: He genuinely believed that beef was safe, he's very much a family man, loves his family, and he thought, 'I can't prove anything better than giving this to my own children.'

MM: But as the 90s went on, more and more questions were raised, and what was being questioned was the near certainty that there was virtually no danger to people. Yet, just months before the true scale of the threat was made public, an Agriculture Minister was suggesting the leading scientists on the committee examining the problem should write a letter to the Times saying the whole thing was media hype. But the evidence was mounting.

RP: Each wave got larger and more vehement than the last one, until catastrophe burst on 20 March 1996. That day the government's advisory committee, Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee, called, which everyone called SEAC for obvious reasons, advised that probably cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in young adults were due to exposure to BSE.

MM: What was your reaction?

RP: I went straight along to tell the Minister. His office was next to mine. I said, 'We're in deep, deep trouble.' People have died agonising deaths young, I mean, that is the single most important thing . . . I wouldn't like anything I say to sort of detracts from that, but nevertheless, in terms of the politics it was obviously going to be a terrible time, which the Major government at that time did not have the strength to sustain satisfactorily.

MM: I'm in a Portsmouth Park, with Christine Lord. Her son Andrew died just before Christmas Day in 2007.

CHRISTINE LORD: Well, Andrew he . . . had the world at his feet, in, in his twenties. He started working at TalkSport when he was 14, he used to take time off school, and I didn't know that, helping out in the studio, and erm, by the time he was 17, erm, 9/11 happened and nobody could get into the studio for some reason and he was actually managing all the studio, so he became known as 'The Legend of the Desk', and he was given a job there on the spot. So he had a wonderful career ahead of him, he had a lovely group of friends.

MM: A journalist, Christine had long been alert to the dangers of BSE.

CL: And lots of my colleagues were talking, you know, in the 80s, about you know, stories that they were going out to, where farms were being shut down and there was these animals staggering everywhere.

MM: Andrew was just six at the time.

CL: I made the decision that my children wouldn't eat any beef or beef products. Not that we ate a lot anyway . . .

MM: (*speaking over*) None at all.

CL: No. Yeah. Terrible irony.

MM: Irony seems too small a word to bear the weight of this tragedy. Christine says she noticed something was wrong when Andrew seemed tired all the time.

CL: He started then complaining of pains in his legs, and he said they were hurting him, and I said, 'Well, why don't you go along to see the GP and get an MOP'.

MM: The doctors thought it was depression.

CL: And then there was a programme on *Newsnight* (*sic*) and it was about the EU and the ban being lifted, about beef, and they were obviously showing the pictures of the cows again and everything like that again, and . . . I looked at them, and of course, by that time Andrew was dragging his legs a bit, and I thought, 'God, it can't be, he can't have human BSE', and I put that to the back of my head, but it was their niggling away. Well over 2006 he gradually became more . . . different really, that's the only way I can describe it.

MM: Finally, he was taken to hospital and diagnosed.

CL: The consultant said to me, 'We were hoping for secondary brain cancer, because we could have done something with that, but he has vCJD, the human form of what is known as Mad Cows Disease. Your son will become bedbound and he'll be dead within six months.'

MM: She took Andrew home.

CL: So I was the first face that he saw in the morning when he woke up, and I was the last face he saw when he went to sleep at night. Because I'm . . . I'm his mum. And Andrew was still my son, I still talk about him as my son. I'll always be a mother of a boy and a girl. Yeah.

NEWSREADER: For years the government has denied there is a link between cattle and human disease. Today, ministers had to admit they may have been wrong.

MM: Back in March 1996, Douglas Hogg, Agriculture Secretary and Stephen Dorrell, Health Secretary formed an uncomfortable double act in the Commons.

DOUGLAS HOGG: The Committee have concluded that the most likely explanation at present is that these cases are linked to exposure to BSE.

STEPHEN DORRELL: The government's chief medical officer advisers says that there is no scientific evidence that BSE can be transmitted to man by beast, indeed, he has stated he will continue to eat beef as part of his varied and balanced diet, as indeed, shall I.

MM: The European Union's Agriculture Commissioner at the time was Franz Fischler.

FRANZ FISCHLER: The British Farm Minister called me and said that he is on the way to the British Parliament announcing that the old theory is no longer valid, and they came to the conclusion that BSE is transmissible to humans.

MM: The reaction from the EU was almost instantaneous. (*Newsnight theme*)

KIRSTY WARK: Good evening, the shockwaves from the beef crisis are deep and worldwide. Courtesy of the European Commission, all British beef and related products are now banned everywhere but in Britain.

MM: Sir Stephen Wall was Britain's ambassador to the European Union.

STEPHEN WALL: The initial response of the British government was very kind of defensive. The British Chief Veterinary Officer organised a meeting of all the European chief that's who were in Brussels, they came to dinner at my house. And the Chief Veterinary Officer made the case for the ban on these products being lifted and he got nowhere. And the reaction in London was, 'Well all these chief veterinary officers from around the European Union, they're all just politically motivated', but they had to go back to their governments and say to their governments, 'It is safe for you to lift the ban', and they weren't really in a position to do that, they didn't know whether it was safe and I think if the boot had been on the other foot, if it had been our Chief Veterinary Officer trying to be persuaded by another member state, we'd have said exactly what they were saying, that, you know, we have to be cautious.

MM: But the caution didn't go down well. In Ireland, farmers clashed with police outside an EU agriculture meeting.

JOHN DRACUP: It was full of worry and frustration.

MM: John Dracup runs a 250 acre hill farm on Dartmoor, the family business.

JD: During the mid-80s, we were running at approximately 70 cows and 350 ewes.

MM: Quite successful farming?

JD: Er, it was successful, it was working well. Clearly the BSE crisis had a big impact on that.

MM: John's herd wasn't infected with BSE, so none of the cows had to be destroyed, but the impact on the industry as a whole meant the family farm was still under threat.

JD: Because what happened on the back of that, it created panic throughout the beef supply chain. Beef exports were suspended almost immediately, which at that time was a huge market for our products. Very soon after the statements were made, supermarkets discounted the product to ensure that it kept moving, consumers purchased that product and stuck it in their freezers, which meant that when the freezers were full, they then didn't return to the supermarkets. There was considerable oversupply on the market with no real demand, which put significant pressure on prices. In fact, it over halved the price of the beef that we were selling at that time.

MM: John had to find work outside the farm.

JD: Farming the family farm was what I always intended to do. To walk away from that was quite, quite a major step and personally one that you don't take lightly.

MALCOLM RIFKIND (?) We are working for an early positive decision by the European Union to lift the ban. We believe that should happen and it should happen in the near future. Of course, if it didn't happen, inevitably other options would be looked at.

MM: The European Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler negotiated late into the night, and onwards towards the dawn.

FF: And then finally, after a long (*word or words unclear, sounds like 'hick-huck'?*) between all the parties involved, we came to the conclusion that the member states would agree and the British minister said he would also subscribe this package of measures, but he cannot give his final green light only if he gets the agreement from the Prime Minister office. But this was between three and four in the morning. And then he phoned the Prime Minister and came back then, more than an hour later, so it was a very long-lasting phone call, when he came back he had really tears in his eyes. And he said that he would regret very much, but the Prime Minister didn't allow him to say 'yes'.

MM: The European ban inflamed the Conservative Party. John Major reacted with anger. Until it was lifted, he'd bring EU business to a standstill.

JM: Without progress towards lifting the ban, we cannot be expected to continue to cooperate normally on other community business. (*cheers from House*)

MM: Sir Stephen Wall.

SW: John Major, I remember having a phone call from him, saying, you know, 'I think I'm about to lose an important vote in the House of Commons, we're going to impose this policy of non-cooperation', and of course, in the usual way of these things, done very much in panic, nobody had thought through actually what a policy of non-cooperation would involve. I mean, the basis of it was that we would veto anything that required unanimity.

MM: What was your reaction?

SW: Erm, well I was . . . I was just kind of stunned really.

MM: Sir Richard Packer was equally appalled.

RP: I was in Europe, I believe in Luxembourg with Douglas Hogg, at a meeting of the Agriculture Council. Douglas Hogg argued with the Prime Minister on the phone, suggesting it was unwise, and I agreed with him because it's all in the name - non-cooperation in an organisation which relies on cooperation is something which is unlikely to yield too many fruits in the long-term, especially if you call it non-cooperation.

MM: But the British press loved it. The Daily Mail celebrated with the headline, 'Major Goes to War Last' The Daily Express declared, 'We have been here before, and one.' Another paper said simply, 'Major now has balls.'

SONG: *When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food it enobled our veins and enriched our blood, our soldiers are brave and our courtiers were good, oh the roast beef of Old England, and old English roast beef.*

MM: (*speaking over*) John Major who had previously channelled George Orwell, claiming England was all about warm beer and old maids cycling to communion, told an audience in Spain beef was a part of the English psyche.

SW: And in a sense that showed the kind of world we were living in, because that, that was entirely beside the point. The point wasn't roast beef or not roast beef, we made a . . . we made a point of serving British beef at some dinner for a visiting European, and it was just sort of stupid really.

MM: The Beef War was underway. The United Kingdom blocked 70 planned EU measures. Sir Stephen Wall again.

SW: So Linda Chalker, who was then development Minister had to come out, and she was the first person to exercise the veto, which she did with great charm and huge embarrassment. And then Michael Howard who's Home Secretary, came out to a meeting of interior ministers and had to veto a proposal that was basically a British proposal.

MM: His own proposal.

SW: His own proposal, yeah. So, I mean, everybody could see that this was really not very sustainable.

MM: Next, Major threatened not to turn up to the Florence Summit. Turn up he did, and climb down.

SW: Fortunately, I mean, Jacques Santerre, the former Luxembourg Prime Minister who was president of the commission understood that basically what the commission had to do was to help construct a ladder down which we could climb. And certainly, one of the problems of dealing with it was because it, you know, it became sort of war on Europe by other means, as it were, as far as the, as far as the sceptics were concerned.

MM: The government was confident the beef ban would soon be lifted. But it wasn't. That took another 10 years. They had been warned.

RP: Hogg also told the Prime Minister, in writing, that the agreement would not lead to a rapid lifting of the beef ban and he was shown to be completely right, although Hogg was very unpopular for writing, and indeed, I was unpopular, reproved by the Cabinet Secretary for allowing him to write it.

FF: This non-cooperation policy, this was an announcement which was positively received by the populist media, but rationally, it doesn't help. What should it bring?

MM: The politicians presumed the Beef War had public backing – it wasn't universally true. Christine Lord.

CL: I thought, well, if they're banning it in Europe, why are they still feeding our children this toxic material here? So I totally agreed with that.

MM: But the government's . . .

CL: Yeah.

MM: . . . reaction wasn't, 'We've got a problem, please help us Europe' . . .

CL: No.

MM: . . . it was, 'We're going to have a campaign to stop this beef ban, get it lifted.'

CL: Yes, because I mean, at the end of the day, it's all been about money and keeping the export trade going and keeping the beef industry going. If, which they should've done, if they'd culled every cow, every heard in the UK – god, the money that would have lost corporations, food corporations, shareholders, the government coffers, and also people were shoring up their own jobs.

MM: But the story became, in some ways, the government's battle with Europe . . .

CL: Yes.

MM: Rather than . . .

CL: Yeah. Well, spin isn't it. Government spin. I mean, really they should have been protecting my son, they should have been protecting your family. I mean, the EU had it bang on.

MM: After Mrs Thatcher's battles over the budget, after continual warnings about an ever-encroaching Brussels, after Major's mauling by the Maastricht rebels, the Prime Minister's defiance in the face of European precautions against a terrifying, fatal disease seemed not illogical but almost inevitable.

RP: Well, this particular thing showed that prime ministers under pressure will cast about for any action which might lessen the tension and placate both sides of the divide.

MM: A shocking, extraordinary, dramatic tragedy had been recast by Conservative politicians and a delighted press into a much more familiar, comforting narrative: a battle with Brussels. It seemed no event could survive contact with Europe without being transformed into being all about Europe. As the Tories staggered towards a cull at the general election, the person Mrs Thatcher described as one of the bravest men she'd ever met, burst into British politics, a technical character variously described as a bold, buccaneering billionaire, or a man with the morals of a tomcat, pushing both main parties down a path towards a plebiscite on Europe. Was Sir James Goldsmith the man who changed a nation. Sir Jimmy, and the Referendum Party, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 8. The Most Successful Party that Never Won a Seat

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MAX HASTINGS: I thought he was odious, from top to bottom. I mean he's the sort of man who makes billionaires . . . gives them a bad name.

LADY ANNABEL BIRLEY: I remember him as being incredibly kind and loving, a good father and brilliant man.

PETER LILLEY: Well, he was flamboyant.

MARK MARDELL: Sir James Goldsmith divided, but never ruled. One critic said he had the instincts of a bookie, and the morals of a tomcat. In the mid-90s this brash billionaire formed a party which only fought one election, and failed to win a single seat. How much could that matter? Perhaps a great deal.

DAVID MELLOR: He made the Conservative Party promise a referendum. Tony Blair then did likewise.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: a Love Story?' There's a question mark there, a big one. Was the UK's affair with the European project ever more than a coldhearted dalliance? Certainly by now some are arguing that we should be thinking about breaking the whole thing off. We're examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, asking if the future was written in the past, sometimes looking at these moments under odd lights and that curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves today.

NEWSREADER: Into King's Cross station London come two young newlyweds whose romance and runaway marriage has been making headline news: Jimmy and Isabel Goldsmith.

MM: It was the elopement of the century, the 18-year-old South American heir rests Maria Isabella Patino running away from daddy to marry James Goldsmith, gambler and entrepreneur.

JOURNALIST: And what are you going to do now?

JAMES GOLDSMITH: We're going straight to bed.

MM: It ended in tragedy, Maria Isabella died from a brain haemorrhage when seven months pregnant. Goldsmith was the son of an independent MP from a family of bankers, who owned a string of luxury hotels. His mother was French, Paris as much is home as London. In the end, perhaps you loved the hacienda in Mexico more than either. He'd won a fortune on the horses while at Eton, before he was asked to leave that incubator of the upper classes, a class he felt tried to exclude him because of his inclination and their snobbery.

JAMES GOLDSMITH: People are upset by vulgarity, and vulgarity is to some degree a sign of vigour, it means that new people coming from nowhere are making it.

MM: He had the face of a fallen cherub, he was 6 foot 5 of appetite: for women, for money and, a friend wisely observed, not for power but influence. We'll come to that in a moment and so will he. But first there's money to be made, women to be wooed. One daughter cheerfully confessed ideally her dad would have liked a harem. He did manage three wives, eight children and always, always at least one mistress on the go. For 10 years,



that was Lady Annabel. (*Music: Whispering Jack Smith, 'Miss Annabelle Lee'*) Lady Annabel, named after this, her mother's favourite song from the 20s was aristocratic, beautiful and part of the London scene, particularly at the nightclub named after her, Annabel's.

LADY ANNABEL BIRLEY: And it was at Annabel's where the romance started. And I think the first thing I remember is clapping eyes on him, was (*name unclear*) was on the floor, playing backgammon and looking out of the corner of his eye of our (*words unclear*) tigers. Terrified, looking to see whether it was . . .

MM: Real tigers.

LA: Real tigers.

MM: Finally she became Sir James's third and final wife and probably knew him better than anyone else.

LA: I don't know if he was portrayed as such, but he certainly wasn't a party animal at all, I mean, that doesn't mean to say he didn't go, but what he really liked doing was coming back early, having scrambled eggs in bed, and putting on the television. Because he was a hard worker, he was a real grafter, Jimmy, you know, he worked incredibly hard.

MM: So, what was he really like?

LA: In fact, actually, he was incredibly loving and kind, and erm . . . temper, he did have an incredible temper, not so much with people but with objects. The television would get a good kick. I mean, if he was living now and had an iPhone, it would go straight out of the window if it didn't work. Things that didn't work got hurled around.

MM: One of the things that didn't work was the European Union. He'd tried to throw it right out of the window. But first he had to make his fortune. He made it hand over fist, from pharmaceuticals and food, timber and tyres, his interests were endless, crossing the path of some of the best-known names in business, from Mothercare to Bovril, to Alka-Seltzer. He was a buccaneer of the high seas of finance, sailing close to the wind of propriety, taking no prisoners. Woe betide anyone who breathed out loud that he was a corporate raider, an asset stripper. The Money Programme on the BBC dared to suggest as much.

JAMES GOLDSMITH: Will you stand by what your reporter said last week?

JOURNALIST (*fragments of words, or words unclear*)

JG: Will you? Look, I'm asking the question.

J: Absolutely.

MM: He seemed to relish a vicious legal feud with Private Eye, which almost became a farcical soap opera. They lampooned him as a dodgy grocer, Sir Jams Fishpaste, but it wasn't all about business, there was that influence he craved. He first cause was environmentalism.

JG: Technocised societies thus far have exploited the earth, we must reverse this trend and take care of it with love.

MM: In his book *The Trap* he ranged wider, attacking global trade, the social torment of immigration, nuclear energy, Brussels bureaucracy and the single currency, and this became *the* cause. He formed a French party, L'Autre Europe, and became a member of the European

Parliament. Lady Annabel says this was gradually becoming her husband's main political obsession.

LA: He was terribly scarred, Jimmy, by what had happened a little bit to his family, and what had happened to hundreds of Jewish families. And I think it was sort of fear, and also this horror he had of us being governed by Brussels. That, that frightened him.

MM: He kept in close contact with Conservative pals back across the channel. Eurosceptics recognised an ally. Goldsmith was close to Mrs Thatcher, after his death she described him as a fighter, one of the bravest men she had ever met, a warrior for truth, a great-hearted patriot. He burst on British politics in those troubled Major years when one word was on many lips.

*Montague of newsreaders/presenters/politicians all saying 'Referendum'*

MM: Jimmy Goldsmith wooed politicians as relentlessly as he chased women. He talked to Cabinet ministers like Peter Lilley.

PETER LILLEY: I remember some young chaps working for the Research Department came over to stay with me in France, and one of them was going on to work for Jimmy Goldsmith, and told Jimmy. And Jimmy said, 'Well, tell the Lilley's to come down for lunch' – he had a château in Burgundy, and I said, 'I'm not going to drive all the way to Burgundy for lunch', and the message came back, 'Oh, it's only three hours', and I said, told him, 'I'm frightfully sorry, I don't drive three hours to have lunch, tell him to send a helicopter', which he duly did.

MM: He went on the TV show of his friend Sir David Frost to announce big money for a big new idea.

JG: A political party, the purpose of which is only one item: to have a referendum. The party would be launched and it would exist for 30 days, nonpartisan, there would be a candidate in each constituency. Now, what I want to make clear to these people who have written to me on this programme, because you've kindly invited me, is if they want to do that, I will help them.

MM: In the end he answered his own call.

LA: I don't know whether this is entirely true, but I think it does sound very Jimmy-ish. He said that he had a vision or a dream that he was standing at the top of the mountain, and he looked down and he could see a train coming with all his family and it, and another one coming the other way and it was going to be the most appalling train crash. And immediately after that he got together Jim Slater and a few other people and decided at that stage that he was going to form a party.

MM: His aim became to challenge all but the most Eurosceptic Conservative MPs at the next election. It took a while to get off the ground. Christopher Monckton, now Lord Monckton, a former adviser to Mrs Thatcher, said he was instrumental in the take-off. He'd carried out a huge telephone poll on the Maastricht treaty.

LORD MONCKTON: I could write to all of them saying that Jimmy Goldsmith is recruiting candidates and would they like to put their names forward. And so we simply sent all the names of those who'd given their permission to Jimmy Goldsmith's people, and within months they'd managed to get their 650 candidates.

MM: They now had their candidates, and Lord Monckton had a celebratory lunch with Sir James.

LM: And I said, 'Well, how is the Referendum Party going to do this, you know how hard it is for parties from nowhere to get any seats?' And he said, 'Well, what I think we can do is to get enough publicity to panic the two major political parties into conceding that they will not take us into the euro unless they have held a referendum first.'

MM: It was the first time he'd met this man who was rarely out of the headlines. My question again: what was he really like?

LM: He was, of course, charming, very professional. He was actually dying at the time when he thought up the Referendum Party, and he carried on with it nonetheless. There he was, sitting there, looking perfectly fit, but actually not at all fit, and yet he was intensely interested in making sure that this country remained free and remained under the control of the people here and not the government somewhere else.

MM: Others had a very different view.

MAX HASTINGS: Completely malign influence in British politics.

MM: Max Hastings had been editor of the Daily Telegraph, and at this time the Evening Standard.

MH: We mocked him relentlessly for this ridiculous intervention, by a completely irresponsible expatriate billionaire, but one day I was rung up by one of his minions, who said, 'Jimmy has asked me to give you a call, and make plain that after this election is over he's going to destroy you.' And I said, 'Look, we're not living in Sicily, this is not the Mafia or whatever,' but how can you not regard with absolute contempt somebody who behaves like that, or gets his people to talk to you like that?

MM: Nowadays a Conservative MP, former cabinet minister, Priti Patel was then not long out of university, a keen conservative who never stopped being a party member. But she was even keener on this new party. She joined before day one as a press officer.

PRITI PATEL: I walked into an office, and I was greeted with mail sacks, just big, postal sacks of people that had been writing in expressing their views on Europe.

MM: So, that question again: what was he really like?

PP: Charisma, knowledge, insight, but passion and conviction. But I, I also recall very difficult periods, you know, I could hold the telephone, sort of like at arm's length, and I would hear this booming voice, a very strident voice, reminding us what our objectives were and, you know, what kind of outcomes we should be pursuing.

MM: If the aim was to create panic, it worked. This is from a *Panorama* on Sir James's growing impact.

PRESENTER: During the party, here at Claridge's, John Major approached Sir James Goldsmith, and the question of Europe was raised. The Prime Minister is said to have explained his position along the lines, 'Trust me, I'm not a Federalist'. Whatever the intention of the conversation, it served only to stiffen Sir James's resolve to set up his party. Like many Eurosceptics, he wanted certainty on Europe not assurances.

MM: Certainty would take a while.

LA: He did go to John Major, I think twice if not three times, to ask him if he would hold a referendum. John Major didn't agree. Had he agreed, there would have been no Referendum Party, he would have just pulled the plug on it.

MM: The new party geared up to fight the 1997 general election. In some ways, the Referendum Party was the Tory anti-EU right Militant, and in exile. Lord McAlpine, longtime Conservative treasurer, chaired its first conference. Sir James spent three times as much as the Tories on ads in the press. He had a new idea: a twelve minute videotape, 5 million of them, designed to make voters' flesh creep.

PRESENTER (GAVIN CAMPBELL): What you are about to hear will both surprise and outrage you. It's the true story of Europe. It's the story the politicians don't want you to hear.

MM: Sir James himself stood for Parliament in south London – Putney – against the sitting Conservative MP and former cabinet minister David Mellor. There were rallies and there were meetings, and the old-fashioned doorknocking too. Lady Annabel was out every day.

LA: That man fought the whole of the Referendum Party on a daily basis, he was doing things, but at the weekends he would go to Paris and have chemo. He knew he wasn't going to make (*words unclear*), I knew it.

MM: At the end of those hard days campaigning, what was it like?

LA: Absolutely exhausted, he could be himself with me, because I knew he had cancer. Only his ex-wife, me and . . . very close family, I mean, even my children didn't know, that he had cancer.

MM: There was one main reason John Major hadn't yet given in to the demand for a future referendum – or, perhaps that should be to reasons: Michael Heseltine and Ken Clarke. The biggest pro-European beasts of the Conservative jungle had threatened to resign when Major previously toyed with the idea. But when Tory MPs started stampede, making their own pledges in the face of challenges by the Referendum Party, the Prime Minister tried again to change the party's policy.

KEN CLARKE: Hezza and myself gave way at one point, we only did it to cheer our boss up, because he was so desperately persuaded it would solve everything.

PP: I have to say, I mean, that's for us was just an incredible moment.

MM: Priti Patel.

PP: We'd been almost in this . . . I wouldn't say dialogue, but a sort of really active battle, getting our voices out there, getting to that stage was a huge result.

MM: David Mellor says John Major's promise was a hollow one.

DAVID MELLOR: John Major could have promised the angels would appear and not on every front door of everyone who was prepared to vote Tory and grant them any wish they wanted, it wasn't ever going to make any difference. So, the only real significance of John Major's pledge of a referendum is that it perhaps provided a staging post on long the route to catastrophe, finally followed by David Cameron.

MM: The Referendum Party fought 547 seats out of 659, got just over 2.5% of the vote. But going into the count at Putney, Goldsmith was jubilant.

JG: All the parties who refused referenda to start off with have become referendum parties. The Conservatives send out documents saying, 'We are the referendum party' Mr Blair writes in the Sun, 'we are the referendum party', Mr Ashdown says 'We're the referendum party', we're all referendum parties.

MM: David Mellor lost his seat to Labour, but let rip at Goldsmith, who'd taken just 1518 votes.

DM: Mr James Goldsmith, who's got nothing to be smug about, and I would like to say, I would like to say that 1,500 vote is a derisory total, and we . . . and we have shown tonight that the Referendum Party is dead in the water, and Sir James, you can get off back to Mexico, knowing your attempts to buy the British political system has failed.

DM (*Present*): Yes, I was cross because I thought I had served my constituents for 18 years, I deserved the right to say goodbye to them in a properly dignified way, instead of being barracked by two of the more repellent people I ever came across in my political career.

MM: One was the pro-gun candidate, the other . . .

DM: Goldsmith. I despised him as a person. And I despised him before he decided to stand against me. Having the arrogance that made him think that the only opinion that ever mattered was his, thinking that money could buy him everything, an impenetrable ego with a hide thicker than ten rhinoceroses. I think he was just an appalling person.

MM: So, by any normal measure, the referendum party was a failure. It's not the way former Conservative cabinet minister Peter Lilley sees it.

PL: He was probably the most influential single person in British politics, in that he forced us first of all to promise a referendum, that, in turn, caused Tony Blair to counter that by himself promising a referendum, before going into the single currency. That gave Gordon Brown a sort of lever to prevent is going into the single currency at the moment they could have done, which was immediately after Blair's election.

MM: Lord Monckton thinks Goldsmith was the man who blazed the trail to Brexit, a Referendum Party victory, 19 years after his death.

LM: I mean, it's the most successful political party that never won a seat. Both parties did cave in, and that leaves the door open for this strategic objective, ultimately, of coming out of the EU altogether. The people, when they were eventually given their say, decided they would leave the European Union, and we have Jimmy Goldsmith and the Referendum Party to thank for that. You can't say that Jimmy won the war, what you can say is that without Jimmy Goldsmith that war would not have been won.

MM: The battle, won or lost was over. Sir James Goldsmith died less than three months after the general election, at the age of 64.

LA: When Jimmy was really, really ill, when he was on . . . he only had a few more days left, I asked him whether he wanted Robin and I to go on with the Referendum Party, keep it going. He said, 'No, don't, because I think Tony Blair might be a good egg.' (*laughs*) because that's what we all thought.

MM: That 'good egg' was on a course that Goldsmith had set, where the promise of a referendum on the single currency or on something else to do with Europe was now part of the political toolkit. And an echo to from a future yet to come. After all, this was a party, a failure by conventional measures of seats in Parliament, changing the very course of British

history by pressuring a Prime Minister and his party into a promise. If a referendum was now an inevitable pledge, it was one those in power didn't really relish honouring. And this raises a new question: could that 'good egg', a young, pro-European Prime Minister use his overpowering media-savvy skills and rekindle the romance with the EU, and persuade the British public it was love, actually? Blair, Brown and a bike race – Blair leads in Europe, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 9. Blair, Brown and a bike ride

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TERRY WOGAN: Ireland have come in second, and we all know who's won, they've been leading from the beginning, Katrina and the Waves won it for the United Kingdom.

MARK MARDELL: An anthem for a new beginning. In 1997, Britain won the Eurovision Song Contest, just a few days after Labour won the general election. (Song: *Katrina and the waves*, 'Love Shine a Light') New leader, New Labour, new hope, new language?

TONY BLAIR: (*speaking French*)

MM: New Europe, perhaps?

GISELA STUART: The rest of Europe almost couldn't believe it. They had a post-war British Prime Minister who was pro-European because he thought it was in the strategic interest of the whole continent.

MM: Tony Blair wanted to engage with the European project. Many in the EU were weary of those long Conservative years of increasingly negative griping, making the UK seem more like a resistance movement than a positive partner. One of the new crop of MPs, part of the Labour landslide, was German-born.

GISELA STUART: What's more, I had Neville Chamberlain's old constituency. If you told Neville Chamberlain that his constituency, 50 years on, would be represented by a woman, a socialist, and one born near Munich, but don't worry, it's all democratic, you could show that the world can change for the better.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: a Love Story?' There's a question mark there, a new one – could and enthusiastically pro-European Prime Minister convert this soured marriage of convenience into something nearer a love match? Or was that doomed from the start? We've been examining snapshots from the 45 year relationship with European project, hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, asking if the future was written in the past, sometimes looking at these moments under odd lights and that curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves now. (Song: *Katrina and the waves*, 'Love Shine a Light') Katrina and the Waves's euphoric Eurovision winner perhaps captured the sense that this was a fresh start, a chance to shine a new light on the relationship with European project. Was the UK no longer a grouchy outsider singing the same old tune, but a winner, leader in Europe? That's the image Blair wanted to project.

TONY BLAIR: (*speaking French*)

MM: And it was the way a newly-elected Labour MP saw it. German-born Gisela Stuart, who came to be one of the leaders of the Leave campaign in 2016. But 19 years earlier, she was swept up in the optimism.

GS: Labour's attitude to Europe was totally, utterly positive, because, in a sense, we were internationalists anyway, but also Tony Blair. Tony Blair then gave his Cardiff speech in the late 90s, where he outlined his vision of Europe, and some of my German colleagues literally would hold this speech and quote this back at me as if it was the Sermon on the Mount.

MM: Sir Stephen Wall, our ambassador to the EU saw European Blair mania first-hand.

SIR STEPHEN WALL: There was an informal meeting of heads of government, organised by the Dutch. And it was as if Brad Pitt had hit town, you know, they were all were rushing to have their photograph taken with the sort of poster boy, it was very interesting to behold.

MM: At Blair's first European summit in Amsterdam, he was out front, quite literally.

REPORTER: It's Holland, so the Prime Minister took to a bicycle, for an impromptu race with fellow leaders.

MM: Leading Europe's presidents and prime ministers, as they wobbled precariously across the city's canals.

R: It was always obvious who was going to set the pace, and in the final straight romp to a win.

MM: Well, not *that* impromptu. Tony Blair's director of communications and right-hand man, Alastair Campbell, knew an opportunity when he saw one.

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think it probably was my idea to spot very quickly that (*laughs*) it was like quite an interesting symbolic opportunity, in terms of the visuals, if you like. I mean, Tony, relatively young, pretty fit for a politician and there you had Helmut Kohl, very large, God knows when the last time was he'd ridden a bike, and he looked at the whole thing with absolute disdain and discussed. Was it Dini, the Italian Foreign Minister who fell off? I think it was Mike White at The Guardian who said, 'God, you lot are completely incorrigible,' (*laughter in voice*) as Tony Blair came across the bridge, riding one-handed, waving at this crowd, who was sort of going 'Tony! Tony!'

SW: Alastair Campbell was determined that Tony Blair was going to, quotes, 'win the race'. Tony Blair was determined that he was going to win the race as well.

MM: And of course, which led to headlines along the line of 'Blair leads in Europe'.

SW: Yeah, exactly, exactly which was, you know, exactly what Alastair and no doubt Tony Blair wanted.

MM: Did he lead in Europe though?

SW: (*inhales and exhales*) No, is the truth.

TONY BLAIR: (*laughs*) It was a bizarre, slightly superficial thing, obviously. You have a bike ride, and when things are going well for you in politics (*laughter in voice*) everything goes well, so . . .

MM: I always remember your . . . doing the header with the footballer, and thinking, 'God, if you fail there', I mean, did you ever think, 'I might fall off' or something like that?

TB: Yeah, no, whenever you're doing something like that, it's high-risk, high gain. Doing the headers with Kevin Keegan was certainly the most dangerous thing I've ever contemplated.

MM: But the bike ride, you were ahead of the race?

TB: I was ahead of the race, but you know, all you needed was to trip up and fall over and that would have gone down in legend.



MM: It didn't go wrong, Labour did sign up to the Maastricht Treaty's social chapter, but was still part of the awkward squad.

NEWSREADER: At the European summit in Amsterdam, talks on a new treaty for the European Union have run into difficulty. Defence is the main stumbling block, with France and Germany keen to give the EU a military role. Britain and other countries oppose this, with Tony Blair *(fades out)*

MM: A new approach to Europe was part of the New Labour brand.

AC: If you think that our big thing was modernisation, Tony was always very, very keen that Europe was part of that modernisation project. And so, definitely at the strategic level, we wanted to signal and then deliver a different approach, and try to get away from this idea that Europe was just something that was done to us, as opposed to something we could shape.

MM: The new, fresh-faced Prime Minister had plenty of advice, not least from a previous occupant of Number 10.

AC: Maggie came in to see Tony, but she had such this simplistic view – she said at one point, 'Now, the thing about Europe is, you can't trust the French. The Germans still feel very, very guilty about the war. The Italians are only good for clothes, the Spanish are quite good for food.' And she said, 'The only people who are really like us are the Dutch and the Danes, and they're just too small.'

MM: Mrs Thatcher has played a much bigger role than that in Labour's attitude towards Europe. The party had been riven by division in the 1975 referendum, it was part of the reason for the breakaway SDP. But her strong dislike of Commission President, Jacques Delors, and his vision of a Europe of increased workers' rights, made him an attractive figure for Labour and the unions. Lord Lea, then David Lea, assistant general secretary of the Trade Union Congress was instrumental in getting him invited to the TUC conference. He suggested the idea to Ron Todd, boss of the all-powerful Transport Workers, not at that stage keen on the EU.

RON TODD (?): We introduced him to the delegates, and by the end of his speech they started singing 'Forever Jacques'.

JACQUES DELORS: President, friends, it was with great pleasures that I accept the invitation to address congress today.

LORD LEA (?): It was extraordinary, and it was the fact that you could see he had a mechanism to deliver all this. And the mechanism, yet to be unveiled, of course, was the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty.

JD: Dear friends, your movement has a major role to play. Europe need you. Thank you. *(applause)*

MM: I distinctly remember Ron Todd saying Brussels is the only card game in town.

LL: Yeah, am I allowed to say I wrote that speech, and that was in it and . . .

MM: *(laughs)* Oh really?! *(laughs)*

LL: Coming from Ron Todd it sounded more authentic, didn't it?

MM: It did, it did . . .

LL: (*speaking over*) Yes.

MM: It impressed me sitting in the audience.

LL: (*speaking over*) No, I, I . . . I thought, I was saying, I was walking through a wheat field, thinking about this speech, and with a dictaphone in my hand, and I thought I'd try this on, and I thought people would believe it if Ron Todd says it.

MM: On the whole, they did. It was a long march, but hostility towards the European capitalist club changed slowly, gradually under Neil Kinnock to the enthusiasm for the protection of workers' rights under such rules. For most Labour members, anyway, the hard left never changed. But they were almost irrelevant, just a few rebels, like Jeremy Corbyn.

JEREMY CORBYN: My concern is that we need to be very robust against the conditions for the single currency. The single currency will lead to enormous cuts in public expenditure in Britain and a very rapid rise in unemployment. Now, he appeared to make (*fades out*)

MM: Katrina and the Waves's 1997 album was called *Walk on Water*. For the EU, Blair might look like a saviour who could defy the political rules of gravity. (*Song: Katrina and the Waves, 'Walk on Water'*) But European waters are rarely calm for long. Part of the problem of selling Europe was that it was an ever-evolving, ever-shifting thing, always towards ever-greater union, always with a new project in its sights. By the time Blair was in Number Ten, the waves were growing choppy – the single currency wasn't just a promise in a treaty, but a looming reality, with coins being designed, the Central Bank in place. It was *nearly* make your mind up time for Britain. And Brown. And Blair.

TONY BLAIR: I was not passionate about the euro, and indeed, when we first came into office I was kind of pulling it back, but, you know, for me facing the challenge of what to do, I was clear we weren't going to join the euro to begin with, after that, you know, I could see, maybe at some point we would want to, we should certainly position ourselves as positive towards it, otherwise you were going to be damning what was a central European preoccupation, it wouldn't be smart diplomatic politics. The econ— . . .

MM: (*interrupting*) You weren't disappointed that we didn't go in, in the first wave?

TB: No, I wasn't, because the advice I got from people who did study the economics was that it's not clear to us that this thing can be made to work in this way if everyone goes in, because, you know, the German economy and the Italian economy are not really in the same state.

MM: Charlie Whelan was Gordon Brown's assertive, sometimes abrasive press officer and special adviser.

CHARLIE WHELAN: I think that Gordon was always someone who was very pro-Europe, I think his experiences working with the European Union finance ministers was a bit difficult, particularly I remember one Ecofin, which is the finance ministers of Europe meeting in York, where they seemed to spend more time discussing what was going to be on the new euro coins than they did the fiscal rules that would be put in place for the euro. Gordon was always worried about the fiscal rules that you need to be a member of the euro. He thought they were too lax, and therefore he was fairly sceptical.

MM: When Mrs Thatcher fought her Chancellor and Foreign Secretary, Europe was the reason, the excuse, the battleground. History was repeating itself. The roots of the

dysfunctional relationship between Blair and Brown was that the one-time junior partner effortlessly took the leadership when John Smith died. Robert of what he saw as his birthright, Gordon Brown was very clear: economics was his fiefdom. How would he make that clear? I'll tell you over a drink. I'm sitting just off one of the most famous streets in the world, Whitehall. Over there the Foreign Office, a bit further up, Downing Street, behind me Parliament and down the side street the offices of MPs, but I'm actually in the Red Lion pub, it says established in 1435. But history was made here a lot more recently than that.

CW: I've read a lot about incidents in the Red Lion pub, nearly all in true.

MM: We'll set the record straight, Charlie, but we've learnt throughout this series memory is a slippery, uncertain thing.

TB: (*fragments of words, unclear*) I always forget the exact sequence of events here. I knew that we had to make a . . . a statement about it, and I think there was some, yeah, there was some leak.

ROB BLEVIN: I was outside, and Charlie came bowling out . . .

MM: That's Robert Blevin, at the time a Liberal Democrat researcher, enjoying a Friday night drink with friends. He was about to find out Saturdays headlines on that particular Friday night. The Chancellor had given a newspaper interview saying the possibility of joining the euro should not dominate every waking hour. 'If we do not join in 1999,' he said, 'our task will be to deliver a period of sustainable growth.' – hint, hint. The spin was far more explicit. 'Brown Rules out Euro for Lifetime of This Parliament' – remember, this was in the very first few months of this Parliament. Rob Blevin listened on with interest.

RB: Charlie being Charlie, was just kind of unaware of who was around him really, and I was with a gaggle of Lib Dem researchers, and we sort of edged slightly away from the group and listened into the call, which just got more and more interesting.

MM: He said the main conversation he had was with Blair, did you hear any of that?

RB: So I heard that, it's never quite ring true to me, but you know, Charlie knows who he was talking to.

CW: I don't think Tony was quite aware of events, and in fact, Tony rang me at the Red Lion pub, and he was a bit shocked that I'd briefed so strongly that this was an indication that we weren't going to join the euro.

TB: I think I do remember not being able to get hold of Gordon or Alastair at the time.

MM: He says you were rather surprised by what he told you?

TB: Yeah, because I think I was always of the view . . . you don't need to do that. Unless you just want to make a political point about it, why rule anything out? (*Song: Katrina and the waves, 'Love Shine a Light'*)

MM: The problem with Brown and Blair was compounded not just by enmity, years of close partnership.

SW: We kind of assumed that he and Gordon Brown were talking, but actually they weren't talking. And then were a series of meetings, some of which I was at, and there were quite a few meetings where Blair and Brown simply met privately, and I think they were pretty heated meetings.

MM: Where were the meetings you attended?

SW: *(exhales)* They weren't heated, but they were . . . with Gordon Brown being at his most stubborn and kind of *(laughter in voice)* dour, if you see what I mean.

TB: Well we knew what had gone on, *(laughs)* which was enough most of the time, for all the difficulties, we did have a relationship where we could be very frank with each other, and iron out the problems or, if they weren't signed out, they were at least put on the table. *(Song: Katrina and the Waves, 'Walk on Water')*

MM: Even Blair, with all his charisma, powers of persuasion and whacking majority could not kindle the embers of this dying relationship into brightly burning flames.

SW: Tony was the most pro-European Prime Minister we've had in modern times. Yet even he, at times, I think, would have been tempering his sense of pro-Europeanism because he knew that it wasn't always terribly popular here. And there were parts of the European Union that he, that he wasn't terribly keen on.

MM: Even while he was paving the way to power, Blair had somewhat deferred to the presumed instincts of the people – an unquestionable mindset of Murdoch. As the '97 election approached, Blair had written an article for The Sun, headlined 'I love the pound.'

TB: I mean *(laughter in voice)* *(fragments of words, unclear)* well, 'love' is a *(laughs)* it's a sort of . . . bald political word in this context, but erm . . . I mean, what, what was necessary to do, because we were being accused by the Conservatives of, you know, we're going to come in and join the euro and get rid of the pound, it was . . . it was a piece of politics to *(inhales)* make it clearly known to people that we were . . . we're not going to try and dragoon the country into it, and what's more, we understood what the attachment was to our own currency.

MM: What about our big question: could this most pro-European of Prime Ministers have done more to help Britain love not the pound but the European Union. I asked the man himself.

TB: I'm a bit of a sceptic, not simply that I could have done more, but, that, as it were, it's just a question of going out and persuading people. The public has always been in two minds about Europe. I mean, right at the outset, we decided not to join, which I think was the reason why . . . scepticism about Europe became so ingrained, but we always felt Europe was something done to was rather than our idea as it were. And, you know, yeah, I mean, I did make the case for Europe, and possibly I could have done more, but I'm not sure it would have moved the needle much. What you have to do is to keep explaining to people why it's a necessary part of Britain's place in the modern world, and then, whenever a government had been in power, at any point in time with Britain's relationship since 1973 with Europe, if you'd held a referendum, it would have been touch and go – whether in Margaret Thatcher's time, my time, or any other time.

MM: But aren't you saying though that, essentially, Europe is unlovable by the British people, they never were going to love it or even accept that they wanted it, *if asked?*

TB: Brussels is going to be unpopular. Now, that's not to say it shouldn't reform and change, and all the way through my time as Prime Minister I had a message for the country which is to say, we should realise our future lies in Europe, but a message for the European Commission and the European institutions which is to say 'we must change'. I think Europe brings a lot of this upon itself, because it loses sight of what would really rally support for Europe, which is helping deal with the everyday problems in the lives of people. But none of that is to say whatever complaints we have about Brussels and Europe and the way it's run,

breaking it up, when you look at the broad sweep of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century and the rise of new powers and the geopolitics of the world, breaking it up would be a crazy thing to do.

MM: Gisela Stuart too thinks there was something fundamental here.

GS: One of the most important things about Tony Blair is his wish, desire and almost need to define his own relationships. And he thought he could make Europe change the way it operates. And of course, you can't change Europe, it's a different way of making decisions.

MM: New Labour was more positive about the European Union than any government in the previous 20 years. But even Tony Blair could not swim against the tide of public and press opinion, or at least didn't want to squander his political capital on *that* project. Numerous times in making this series politicians have made the point 'Europe was scarcely our main concern,' it never was, until it *is* right now. The Labour government's enthusiasm, even with all the caveats and caution, allowed the Conservative opposition to develop a full-on, no holds barred defence of the pound. And, unencumbered by the diplomatic sensitivities of office, full blown opposition to the direction of the European Union. But was the Blair government about hand Eurosceptics their most powerful ever weapon? A game-changing gift. Immigration: the East and Enlargement – the Poles are coming. Next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 10. Pole Position

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*(Polish music)*

MARK MARDELL: It's the conventional wisdom: an influx from the East changed the UK and pushed Britain towards Brexit.

VOX POP MALE: The ordinary chappy in the street, they're right pig sick.

VOX POP MALE 2: This area has been completely and utterly swamped.

TONY BLAIR: The idea that some person who's unemployed in the North of England is prevented from getting a job by someone coming and working in the hospitality sector in London, I mean, it's just ridiculous.

MM: But conventional wisdom is not welcome here.

VOX POP FEMALE: I think they should put a stop to immigration totally. Stop all immigrants coming in, whether they be European, from the Far East, whatever.

VOX POP MALE 3: Half of them don't come to work – living on the bloody dole.

VOX POP MALE 4: It's very, very upsetting to the people that wish to stay here, that can't afford to move. I think we feel threatened.

MM: Did Tony Blair's government make a catastrophic mistake based on wrong figures, which so soured the British public's attitude towards the European project? That the love story was over forever? Or is it a bit more complicated than that?

TB: We wanted to crack down on . . . freedom of movement, if you like, we could— the reasons we didn't was we didn't choose to as a country. And one of the tragedies of this whole argument is we ended up thinking it's a bad idea, it's a great idea.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: a Love Story?' I've new question: did the relationship with the EU finally flounder on the rocks of a European dream? A dream of what it should be - open, united. We've been examining some snapshots from that 45 year relationship, hearing some intriguing insights from those who were there at the time, asking if they unwittingly wrote our future in the pages of the past. We've learnt few events are seen by all sides as unequivocally bad or good, but then, some are.

REPORTER: I'm standing at the Berlin Wall, and now a huge cheer goes up, as the first of the East Berliners come across to the West. The top of this mechanical grabber is now just about to grab a big concrete pipe on the top of *(fades out)*

MM: The Berlin Wall came down, the Soviet Union fell, and the jigsaw of Europe was vigorously shaken. Germany reunited. Former Soviet states and the USSR's client nations of the East shook off the yoke of communism and turned their gaze westwards towards prosperity and democracy. The Iron Curtain had riven Europe and . . . well, you know where this is going, the clue is in the name, the European *Union*. *(Music: Ode to Joy)* 50 years ago there were six. We joined, with Denmark and Ireland, that made 9, soon to become the 12, with Greece and then in 1986 Portugal and Spain. And 12 it stayed for 18 long years. So, 2004 marks a momentous moment with momentous consequences. The man in charge of making it happen

was the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Günter Verheugen, a German Social Democrat. Was there apprehension, or excitement?

GÜNTER VERHEUGEN: No, no, no, no, no. There were very mixed feelings, until the year 2001, there was still a lot of resistance in member states, but then it changed. There was a lot of progress in (*word or words unclear*) countries and we could manage to convince member states that it was in their own interests. And during the whole period of negotiations, the UK government was my (*laughter in voice*) was my strongest ally.

MM: Leading that strongest ally at the time: Tony Blair.

TB: Britain had two big things that we argued for, under Margaret Thatcher, under John Major, under myself. One was single market, the other was enlargement of the European Union. The single market was important for economic reasons; enlargement was important for geopolitical and security reasons, because bringing Eastern Europe into the European Union was an important part of guaranteeing the eastern borders of Europe, of allowing those countries to develop into democracies, and to allow them to join the NATO alliance. And so this was a huge strategic objective, and I think when you look at the world today and you, you think of resurgent Russian nationalism, thank heaven we did it.

MM: Going under the unlovely name of 'enlargement' – ten new countries, eight from the East, joined in 2004. Perhaps the slightly cynical British view was that this would put the brakes on plans for ever closer union, that like a snake, bloated after swallowing a goat, the EU would have to rest up a while or risk indigestion. Part of the prize for these new countries was the right to travel and work in the more prosperous West. Lord Blunkett, then David Blunkett, was Home Secretary at the time.

DAVID BLUNKETT: I don't think that the debate was as thorough as it might have been, about what the implications would be. It was just assumed that it would be a good thing, because it would provide a broader Europe in which Britain would have a greater influence.

MM: There's long been a suspicion that the Foreign Office preferred widening the European Union as sort of a break on deepening it.

DB: I think that's true. I don't think that was something that was debated sufficiently well inside government.

MM: The new EU nations were certainly happy. Poland celebrated with a midnight military parade and fireworks. Estonia, with parties on the street. (*sounds of celebration*) Hungary, with tastefully waved flags and a classical concert. They were enthusiastic about their new future, but among the old 12 caution, even fear. In France, the spectre was raised of the Polish plumber coming and taking French jobs. This wasn't some sudden alarm, recognition of the worry had been built into the very bricks and mortars of the agreement which allowed them to join. The Accession Treaty as it was called spelt out that the old countries could stop people from the new ones coming to work for two, four or even seven years, if it would harm the economy. They were called transitional arrangements. Only the Brits and the Commission were making the argument that Europe-wide there should be no such limits. Tony Blair makes the point that nothing could stop people coming, it could just stop them working, legally, anyway.

TB: Freedom of movement kicked in immediately. There was no transition of that, if you were a Polish person you were free to come to Britain. There was the ability to have a seven-year transitional period on freedom to work. Now, it's true, the estimates we were given as to the numbers of people who'd come turned out to be way out, but the truth is, we were drawing

people in because our economy was really strong, we needed the workforce, and . . . actually, I think, all the studies show that . . . far from taking people's jobs or being a drain on benefits, there was a net positive contribution from people coming.

MM: You must've . . . because you knew that, presumably, that the other countries, apart from Sweden and Ireland were using this seven-year period, they were doing it for a reason. I mean, how much debate went into that decision?

TB: Well, less than it would've if we'd known what the numbers were going to be, to be blunt about it. But the other worry was that our economy was strong, there was no doubt that people were going to come, and they were coming also because we were English-language, Britain was a great place to come to, we had strong historic ties with Poland (*word or words unclear due to speaking over*) other countries . . .

(*speaking over*) But they wouldn't have come if you'd used that . . . that allowance to stop people?

TB: Well, I was about to say, Germany didn't . . . give freedom to work, had transitional arrangements, and still got a large number of people who just came anyway. So, there's a very strong case for saying a large number of those people would have come in any event, and may have ended up simply working here . . . you know, illegally.

DB: One of the twists of what happened in 2004, and I didn't know this at the time, when I was advocating that we should allow people to work, was that 40% of those who registered in the first year were already in the country. That meant that we were correct in believing that if you didn't allow legal working – and bearing in mind that free movement meant they could come if they wanted – it's quite likely that even more of them would have worked in the sub-economy. I was pleased that people registered, because they wanted to be legal, they wanted to be open, they wanted to live here on a long-term basis, and that allowed them to do so. But they were obviously paying tax and National Insurance, and that was a good thing.

MM: Tony Blair and David Blunkett both mention – perhaps 'blame' is not too strong a word – a report which had been commissioned by the Home Office. It was later mocked for getting the figures of those coming wrong by around 2000%. The author was Professor Christian Dustmann of the University College London, who was then, and is now Director of the Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration.

PROFESSOR CHRISTIAN DUSTMANN: We did the report based on the assumption that the larger European countries such as Germany would likewise allow for free mobility from the point of accession onwards.

MM: And on the basis of that, what did you find?

CD: Well, first of all, of course, warned in that report that any estimates have to be looked at with great caution. We then predicted that net migration from the Eastern European countries to the UK averaged, over a period of 10 years, would be of the magnitude of about 13,000 per year.

MM: Which turned out to be wrong.

CD: Er, it was not wrong, it was not a number anymore that should have been used in the political debate, after Germany and other European countries declared that they would not allow for free movement of labour.



MM: And your report was quite explicit that it was based on the assumption everybody would open their doors to workers?

CD: It was commissioned on that basis and it was explicit about that.

MM: The Conservative leader at the time, Michael Howard, challenged Tony Blair about the decision.

MICHAEL HOWARD: Virtually every other country, with the exception of the United Kingdom and Ireland, has taken advantage of those provisions in the treaty. And of course, the problem is that if we alone don't impose any restrictions, when every other country does, then we will be the only country to whom the, to which these people will be able to come in search of work.

MM: But did the Treasury really think that there would be little impact? Or did they know it might push wages down, and welcome that?

DB: They believed, and I think they were right, certainly avoid wage-push inflation, which inevitably means that there was a general downward pressure on wages and salaries more broadly, but not on any particular group.

MM: But it was deliberately done with the idea in mind that it could keep wages down?

DB: It was a subset of the . . . er, the argument that went on, and particularly from the Treasury. What I think we fail to really appreciate was that there were other downward pressures on living standards. I call them slow-burners. There was a slow-burner from deindustrialisation, there was a slow-burn, not quite so slow, in terms of the global meltdown in 2008, and that then added to a very slow build-up of resentment about the decisions taken on the question of European migration, i.e. EU migration.

MM: The reaction wasn't instant, but by 2010 the BBC was running a documentary series, *The Poles are Coming*.

PRESENTER: One city area in particular has been affected by this unplanned influx of foreigners. Stroll up and down (*fades out*)

MM: Black and white archive of a prosperous Peterborough in the 1950s gives way to contemporary colour shots of a contentious present, as the presenter stalks the street.

P: Now it's a little slice of the world with a strongly Polish flavour.

VOX POP MALE 5: What we're not facing up to the fact is, and everybody is seemingly turning a blind eye and thinking it doesn't affect them, is the change and the rapid change that is taking place. And I live right in the centre of it.

VOX POP FEMALE 2: They should sort out what the problem is now, the issues they've got with planning, housing, the rules and regulations, the language barriers, the communication, the way of life that British people use should be honoured, it should be respected.

VOX POP MALE 6: If immigration is good for the economy, why isn't the economy paying for it? Whitehall don't want to know. All they want to do is (*fades out*)

MM: The debate still rages of course. Professor Christian Dustmann believes it was right for the economy.

CD: We shouldn't forget that that was a period during which the UK was growing by, on average, 3% per year, we had decreasing unemployment. On the other hand, we had skill shortages in the NHS, which was expanding quite dramatically. We had skill shortages in London, you couldn't find a builder, you couldn't find a plumber. So relieving those economic shortages by allowing for migration was economically certainly not the wrong decision. Whether it was politically the right decision is something, well, you may have to ask Tony Blair and David Blunkett.

MM: Okay, we will! Was it a mistake?

TB: Well, I don't think it was a mistake in the context of the time, but I think if you were going back and doing it again now and you could project the future, as it were, well, you would have to look at the arguments much more carefully.

DB: No, I don't think it was. I'm one of the very few people who still believe that it was the right thing to do. I think that circumstances since have changed the whole nature of the debate.

MM: We've focused in on a decision in 2004, which some see as the turning point, which gave rather theoretical arguments about our relationship with the European Union a sharp edge in many a British town. European policy made such immigration possible, and the British government of the time embraced it. But in asking how that played in the referendum vote, 12 years later, it's important to point out the way the world was changing, chaotically, frighteningly, for the worse. There was the crash of 2008, and then, one of the most important factors in modern politics, pictures, heart-wrenching pictures of children in peril, terrible pictures of people pulled from the sea, people fleeing war or just in search of a better life, risking drowning. And after those pictures, tugging on the heartstrings, more filmic images pulling in the opposite direction. Would-be migrants, crashing against fences, struggling bewildered into a promised land, they had promised themselves, which turned out not to flow with milk and honey, but wormwood and bile. They were not Polish plumbers or Bulgarian barristers of course, but from Africa and the Middle East, and their reflections had little or nothing to do with free movement of European workers. But those in charge back in 2004 argued this is what made the difference.

TB: If I'd still been in government in the last 10 years, you know, and I'd noticed this becoming a huge problem, I would have been acting on it. One of the things, again, people don't understand about the freedom of movement and so on is that, for example, you are perfectly entitled, if you want, and some European countries do, to say to people, 'If you've been there two months and you haven't got a job, and can't support yourself, we'll send you back.' We could have done that, as Britain. And . . . in the end, freedom of movement itself, one of the tragedies of this whole argument is that we end up thinking that it's a bad idea. It's a great idea. Of course, you've got to be careful about things like undercutting wages, and there's lots of things you can do to stop that. But one of the great things about the creation of Europe is that people are free to move and . . . for example, young people got the opportunity to go and study abroad, people come here and we go there, young people can go and work abroad, I think that's fantastic. And the idea that some person who's unemployed in the North of England is prevented from getting a job by someone coming and working in the hospitality sector in London, I mean, it's just ridiculous. There are better ways of dealing with that problem of . . . alienation, of communities and people, than trying to prevent the free movement of people from the rest of Europe.

MM: In the 45 years of torrid debate, the European question had threatened to tear apart first the Labour Party and then the Conservatives. But the arguments were often highfalutin abstractions, sovereignty and treaties. This Eastern immigration touched people's lives, changed their high streets, perhaps challenged the sense of self. Yet, the initial 2004 influx

wasn't an imposition by Brussels, but choice by a British government, which saw clear economic benefit. But this debate erupted as Europe itself was in the middle of another evolution, a new constitution, new referendums, and another practical result of one-time abstraction: the euro crisis, which further tempered any warm feeling towards the union. It played into the hands of a new party and a new charismatic leader, who did more than anyone else to force the question 'in or out', to the very top of the political agenda. The irresistible rise of Nigel Farage, next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 11. Banging on about Europe

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[Top Gear theme tune]

MARK MARDELL: Top Gear on top form, in a slightly disgruntled, definitely undeferential Britain, where lad culture had grown up and turned into the rise of the bloke. James May was one of them.

JAMES MAY: Yes, I think the mood did become a bit prissy, but our immediate reaction was, well, slightly reactionary. And we could be a bit naughty and annoy the teachers, but we weren't really doing anything very terrible.

MM: Was there a certain mood in the country?

JM: I don't know if that's reading too much into it, it may just have been that we were a bit of light entertainment, and it gave people a bit of relief from thinking about having to back to work the next day. Or it could have been that, vicariously, people were kicking back, via us. It's like embracing someone else's radicalism at a safe distance. But we weren't radical, we were just . . . slightly naughty (*laughs*) if that.

MM: Another bloke was thumbing his nose at the establishment, pint in hand, off-colour quip and fag never far from his lips.

NIGEL FARAGE: People from Bolton park their car in a garage . . .

UNNAMED SPEAKER (*Andrew Neil?*): As in 'Farage'.

NIGEL FARAGE: And they call me 'Farage'. And people from Oxfordshire, generally call me 'Farage' (*words unclear due to speaking over*)

UNNAMED SPEAKER: What do you park your car in?

NF: I'm a soft southerner, so it's a garage.

MM: Nigel (*gives southern and northern pronunciations*) Farage? Farage? Farage? You can pronounce it how you like, you can spit the name or say it, not with reverence but an approving, indulgent chuckle.

NF: (*sounds like secret recording*) I think alcohol is like nationalism, small amounts of it make us all feel happier, (*another speaker laughs loudly*) make the world a better place, and too much of it leads to disaster.

MM: Nigel Farage felt like a one-man whirlwind – he mattered because of the way he changed the weather, but there was another bloke on the block.

DAVID CAMERON: While parents worried about childcare, getting the kids to school, the balance between work and family life, we were sometimes banging on about Europe.

MM: Bang, bang – you're dead. (*theme music*) I'm Mark Mardell, and this is 'Brexit: a Love Story?' There's a question mark there, it's grown bigger every episode, but perhaps this time it might transform itself into an exclamation mark, signalling a contemptuous rejection of the whole nation of a warm relationship with the European Union. So was the UK's affair with the European project always hurtling towards the cliff-edge? Or was it propelled there with

purpose, political will and intention? We are looking at one of the most vehement advocates for leaving and asking how much difference he made.

ALEX PHILLIPS: He's just massively engaging, he's a very real person.

MM: Alex Phillips was moonlighting from journalism school and perhaps a little starstruck.

AP: He happened to be going round in the back of a Cadillac with the late Dai Llewellyn, who was a bit of a card, so I hopped in the front seat and filmed him and Dai Llewellyn in the back of this Cadillac, yelling various things to potential voters through a massive megaphone and swigging a bottle of champagne. It's hard to not strike a chord with a man who offers you free champagne.

MM: Farage was an on and off leader of UKIP, but from early on part of the anti-European crowd. As an MEP it gave him a platform in the belly of the beast, the European Parliament, home of the Belgian waffle. Speech is often serious, technical, self-indulgent. He set out to make himself the bad boy of Brussels.

NF: I've often asked myself the question why would a successful country that's enjoyed 1000 years of independence give up its right of self-government to the unelected nonentities that we see sitting before us this morning. And the answer that *(fades out)*

MM: Dan Hannan was a fellow lifelong Eurosceptic, then and now a Conservative MEP.

DANIEL HANNAN: We were elected on the same day in 1999, in the same region.

MM: What do you make of him?

DH: Well, you know, incredibly energetic character, almost tireless in his pursuit of whatever he's picked as his objective at that moment. I think he did play an extraordinary role in creating a party out of nothing.

MM: Alex Phillips eventually joined him as a press officer.

AP: Using things like YouTube and social media, he was able to build up a head of steam and present something that, you know, daily media were simply not covering or talking about, and break a lot of taboos in doing so.

MM: Across the water at home, the new leader of the opposition David Cameron wanted to change the Conservatives image, wanted to perform the same trick for his party that Blair had done for Labour - drag it into the electable middleground, rejecting tweedy nostalgia for Thatcher and the 1950s, shrinking the 'C' in Conservatism, symbolised by a speech at his first party conference.

DC: For years, this country wanted, this country needed, desperately, a sensible centre-right party that would do sensible, centre-right things. Well, that is what we are today.

MM: He was very clear in his contempt for UKIP, speaking on LBC.

DC: I mean it's just a sort of, you know, bunch of er . . . well, they're just trying to bake a bit of mischief, as far as I can see . . .

PRESENTER: 'As far as I can see a bunch of' what?

DC: *(laughs)* Well, fruitcakes and loonies and closet racists mostly.

MM: Perhaps he made people think about themselves. *Top Gear's James May*, again.

JM: One of the things that always worried me about . . . about presenting *Top Gear* – and I'm not just speaking for myself now, I remember talking to Jeremy Clarkson at length about this – is that we might have been perceived as being a bit UKIP, a bit reactionary, a bit isolationist. In reality we're not, we don't really have an island mentality, well, we can't, we travelled all over the world and we still do, and we, you know, embrace other cultures and we spend a lot of our time, actually, despite the accusations of xenophobia, we spend most of our time laughing at Britain.

MM: With humour and invective, Nigel Farage excoriated the elite and flourished his common touch like a flag. And it was a banner in the ground for the dispossessed and disgruntled to rally round. In an increasingly well-mannered, monochrome political world, he was a vulgar burst of colour, like a character from a novel. Former Deputy Prime Minister and Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, is not impressed.

NICK CLEGG: I find all this highly kind of synthetic, but, in an age where cartoon characters almost, from the pinstripe suit of Rees-Mogg to the beer-wielding bonhomie of Nigel Farage, all of that kind of stuff gets, yeah, gets very quickly picked up and amplified as somehow different, even though, actually, in many respects, it's not remotely different at all.

MM: He had the platform, he had a hot topic growing ever hotter. The European Union was changing, developing a Constitution, with, as some never failed to point out, a flag, an anthem, citizens, all the trappings, they would say, of a country, a state. The French and Dutch referendums killed that off, but not for long. The stone dead European Constitution was resurrected as the Lisbon Treaty. That too was rejected in an Irish referendum, until they were persuaded to vote again. Grist to the mill for those who saw the EU as an unstoppable, undemocratic juggernaut, crushing all opposition, including Her Majesty's official opposition. David Cameron had vowed if he was Prime Minister, Britain would get a vote on Lisbon, then this significant reverse:

NEWSREADER: The Conservative leader, David Cameron, has set out his party's new policy on Europe, after he was forced to abandon a pledge for a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

FEMALE NEWSREADER: David Cameron has said the leadership is disappointed its campaign for a UK referendum on the controversial Lisbon Treaty is over but he blamed (*fades out*)

MM: Some Conservatives would be up in arms about gay marriage, others were less than impressed by the hugging of hoodies, but to the ever-alert Eurosceptics like Dan Hannan, this was the critical moment.

DH: That was a huge mistake and that was really when it became clear that our only option as Eurosceptics was to have a referendum on leaving altogether.

MM: Cameron wasn't even Prime Minister yet, but there were mutterings. Many Conservatives felt 'left behind' – a phrase we would hear a lot more of in the coming years. Quite a moment for Farage to come to the fore, as leader of his party, with unashamedly old school appeal.

NF: There is now an enormous vacuum in British politics. David Cameron clearly has decided to abandon conservatism, and on the big issues of the day you cannot put a cigarette paper between the three major parties (*applause*)

MM: The vague feeling 'they're all the same', was hammered home by the financial crisis.

NEWSREADER: There have been dramatic fluctuations on stock markets on both sides of the Atlantic . . .

FEMALE NEWSREADER: Northern Rock is to be nationalised, the Treasury temporarily takes control of the troubled bank . . .

HUW EDWARDS: It's now official, after two successive quarters of economic decline, we're in recession for the first time since the early 90s.

MM: The crash brought down banks, but did so much more. It added fat to the fire, poured petrol on the glowing embers of resentment - resentment of conventional politics, and of politicians who couldn't get a handle on the crisis, who were too busy trying to deal with it, to reflect the rage and resentment which bubbled up seeking an outlet. The time seemed ripe for UKIP, Farage resigned as leader to fight a general election seat, in 2010 he nearly died in a plane crash on election day. And UKIP's hopes also took a nosedive, ending up with just 3% of the vote. Instead: coalition - Cameron's Tories with Clegg's Liberal Democrats, not banging on about . . . one thing in particular.

NC: We both readily agreed, very sort of breezily almost, that the one thing we were not going to let happen was Europe was not going to sort of dominate the coalition government as it had in the past.

MM: It's worth reminding ourselves of what the then-editor of The Sun, Kelvin MacKenzie, said in one of our earlier episodes.

KELVIN MACKENZIE: Then along came Nigel Farage, and suddenly, Cameron bows at the knee, he would have never, never, never have bowed at the knee to a Sun headline. It was the politics of the moment, there was somebody who looked as though he was going to rob the Conservative party of a good chunk of votes, therefore something had to be done.

MM: And so, the idea came about of a big speech, with a big promise – the central promise which destroyed Cameron and changed our country's future: the promise of a referendum, in or out of Europe. Nick Clegg saw it from inside government.

NC: There'd been so much sort of chuntering, both, you know, behind the door of Number 10, and in the corridors of power, and then, of course, endless, endless kind of cheater-chatter in newspaper— particularly Conservative-supporting newspapers who wanted to push him in that direction. And of course, I was aware, because, you know, David Cameron and George Osborne, Danny Alexander and I would spend hours together, and it was quite obvious that they were both getting increasingly rattled by what was happening within their own party and the . . . what appeared to, at one point, to be the sort of cannibalisation of the Conservative Party by a resurgent UKIP. I think at one point he and/or Osborne even fleetingly sought to suggest to me, given we'd already agreed as a coalition on the kind of legal trigger that would lead to a referendum in law already, could we not go one step further and agree, as a coalition, to hold a referendum, which I, of course, said, 'Well no, not on your nelly.'

MM: Still remember 'not banging on about Europe'? David Cameron banged on and on, at Bloomberg.

DC: Today, public disillusionment with the EU is at an all-time high . . .

MM: A breakfast speech, with plenty of food for thought, in the ultra-modern London headquarters of Bloomberg. The Prime Minister on a video wall, and a promise.

DC: We will give the British people a referendum with a very simple 'in or out' choice, to stay . . .

DH: I thought it was the most significant and positive speech that a leader of a British major political party had made since the Bruges speech in 1988.

DC: If we left the European Union, it would be a one-way ticket, not a return.

MM: For UKIP, a moment of authentic existential justification.

DC: It is time for the British people to have their say, it is time for . . .

MM: Alex Phillips says Cameron had banged himself into a corner.

AP: Anyone who has any grasp of European politics knows that it's not just about the attitude of the EU that doesn't want to reform, it's almost technically and legally impossible, because things are bound up in treaties and it's so bureaucratic, and it moves at a glacial pace, so when Cameron's saying, 'I can make real change and bring that back to the British people', it was doomed to fail. And actually, by then promising a referendum and dancing to our tune, it then enabled the media to start talking a lot more about the EU, and reporting on the rise of Euroscepticism, which they didn't before, it was impossible to get coverage for these opinions before, and now it's everything we talk about every day.

MM: And we do talk about it every day, you could say 'bang on' about it, because of this speech. Was this *the* critical moment, the choice where one possible past led to all our futures? For Nick Clegg, it was a defining moment which coloured his view of the coalition he'd been so proud of.

NC: I remember complaining that I had taken, lead my party into coalition with the Conservatives precisely because I believed what Cameron had earlier said about not banging on about Europe, and I remember saying to him that it was increasingly like being in coalition with a sort of demented gorilla. He made it quite clear that he felt that he was under unstoppable pressure from within his own party to make this movement.

MM: Did you use the term 'demented gorilla' to his face?

NC: I think I did, yes.

MM: Bloomberg didn't burst the bubble, but summoned more demons to haunt Cameron. UKIP didn't actually win a by-election in Eastleigh later that year, but they did come second, pushing the Tories into third place. Now it felt like a rollercoaster, on the heels of Eastleigh the 2014 local elections, and Euro elections. Remember, everyone was reading the runes for the following year's general election.

DAVID DIMBLEBY: And, of course, the party with most to talk about, and the biggest mouth in politics at the moment, Nigel Farage's UKIP, picking up votes and seats, right round the country.

FEMALE PRESENTER: You can see, for the first time in England we've got a proper for party political system, UKIP, the insurgents have crossed that 100 councillor mark now, they're looking like quite serious players. Labour (*fades out*)

MM: Some Conservatives thought it was time to deal with UKIP.



DH: It seemed to me that a Eurosceptic majority in the country was again going to be frittered away in different parties and lead to a Europhile majority in Parliament.

MM: But that meant at the time that you were suggesting a pact with UKIP.

DH: Yes it seemed to me that in the seats where it was likely to make a difference it would have made sense.

MM: There were whispers Dan Hannan would defect. He stayed. His friends had different ideas.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL: I'm today leaving the Conservative Party and joining UKIP (*cheers*)

MM: Douglas Carswell's defection and by-election victory gave UKIP their first ever MP, catastrophic for Cameron.

DOUGLAS CARSWELL: The problem is that many of those at the top of the Conservative Party are simply not on our side. They aren't serious about the change that Britain so desperately needs. Of course, they talk the talk (*fades out*)

MM: These were heady days for insurgents.

AP: The excitement of those defections, there was such an energy, especially when Mark Reckless came over, we knew what had happened with Carswell, and we had the entire media standing there, every time a helicopter went over, journalists were like, 'Who is it, who's going to parachute out, is it going to be this, is it going to be that?' The speculation, and that kind of excitement and anticipation was incredible.

MM: And Mark Reckless was smuggled in, wasn't he, wearing a baseball cap and dark glasses?

AP: There was (*laughter in voice*) Yeah, yeah, he was sort of hiding behind a curtain for about half an hour before he was released on stage.

MM: Reckless, like Carswell, forced a by-election, won, and became the second UKIP MP. The way they tell it now, it was as much about changing UKIP as giving their old party a kicking.

MARK RECKLESS: We got Nigel out of the pubs and buying ice creams and sort of coffee shops and I think even into McDonald's. But yeah, some people, you know, were drawn to UKIP for that, but I think a wider number of other people could have come into UKIP for whom perhaps these cultural references weren't necessarily going to be what sort of pulled them in.

MM: This was a sea change in British politics, whether it takes is onto the rocks or the freedom of the open seas. Was it down to Nigel? How much did one determined, charismatic maverick unmake British politics? Mark Reckless.

MR: I think he was central to getting us the referendum. And I think bringing into that coalition who were going to vote Leave people who'd never voted before, for whom immigration and a feeling that they'd been let down by the other parties were motivating things. I think Nigel was important to bring them in.

MM: Nick Clegg thinks much greater forces were in play.

NC: Whilst, you know, Farage is a . . . talented rabble-rouser and populist, I think even he probably in his calmer moments would admit that, you know, it wasn't just because of his political dexterity or skills that we had this great kind of sea change of opinion in the United Kingdom, my, my own view is, by far the most important factor is not actually to do with any politician at all, Farage or anybody else, it's, it's very much to do with the profound scars left after the 2008 financial crisis.

MM: But this was never about just one man, it was about at least two men. UKIP had consistently exceeded expectations in European and local elections – the ever-present Nigel punching through into the popular imagination, social media, red top tabloids and the BBC, 'Why do you have to keep interviewing that man?' But they simply couldn't hack it in the general election. Even in the heaviest of the glory days, there was never a real chance of a UKIP majority, minority or any other sort of government. Never a chance of them ruling and deciding. Instead, what they did played to the outlaw image, riding rough on the range, whooping into town, vulgar and aggressive, creating panic among the homesteaders, stampeding the Tory horses, lighting fear in the sheriff's eyes.

NC: And I remember saying to Cameron at the time, I said, 'Look, you know, you may think this is doing you a lot of good, you know, pandering to the idea that somehow you're wielding a veto when it's nothing of the sort, but in the end, this is a strategy which leads you know where, because your, you know, swivel-eyed anti-European backbenchers will never, ever be satisfied until the United Kingdom is out of the European Union, and, if necessary, you're out of office.

MM: Out of office indeed. One man had crystallised the mood of some in the public, after an economic crash which left many sore and out of sorts with the establishment, and capitalised on something beyond his control: a coalition government which turned the established party of protest into an establishment party. The Lib Dems became seen as Cameron's stooges, leaving a gap in the market. Farage had perhaps forced Cameron into a position where he had to fold or raise. But he didn't, couldn't, make the choice himself. It had been Cameron who had capitulated. Next time, on 'Brexit: a Love Story?' we all know where we're going, but as yet it's still hung in the balance for the Prime Minister. There was an election to win or lose, a renegotiation to succeed or fail, friends who had to choose loyalty or betrayal. Five miscalculations and the resignation – next time on 'Brexit: a Love Story?'

## 12. Five miscalculations and a resignation

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DAVID CAMERON: I will do everything I can as Prime Minister to steady the ship over the coming weeks and months. But I do not think it would be right for me to try to be the captain that steers our country to its next destination (*fades out*)

MARK MARDELL: One thing's for sure, he didn't want it to end like that. Striding or stumbling, bold, brave or foolhardy, David Cameron took the steps which led to his own destruction.

SIR CRAIG OLIVER: I tell the story of him going through all the reasons why he felt he had to call a referendum, and I said, 'Well, can you think of the reason why you shouldn't call it?' And he said, 'Because you could unleash demons.'

MM: Unwitting hero of the great British revolution, or the man who's to blame Brexit. His friends see him as acting out the inevitable, swept along by the deep currents of history, but swept onto unexpected shores.

KATE FALL: He certainly thought he would win it, (*laughter in voice*) otherwise he wouldn't have called it.

MM: Five miscalculations and a resignation. I Mark Mardell, and this is Brexit: A Love Story? – that question mark, that question, is ever more pertinent. Was our future written in the past? Was our 45 year relationship with the European project doomed from the very start? But now, the end is near – of this series that is – we're asking something slightly different. We're still hearing the inside story told by those who were there at the critical points, sometimes looking at these moments under odd lights and at curious angles to see what we can learn about ourselves today. But this isn't so much about the broad thrust of history as whether seemingly small steps, miscalculations in the eyes of those who made them, propelled us towards that particular exit, on that particular date: June 23, 2016. That depended on another date, 7 May, a year earlier.

DAVID DIMBLEBY: And welcome back to our election coverage, Conservatives the largest party, David Cameron pretty well certain to form the next government, that's how things stand at (*fades out*)

MM: It was, to say the least, a bit of a surprise.

KF: We were absolutely thrilled to win.

MM: David Cameron's close friend and then deputy chief of staff Kate Fall, now Baroness Fall.

KF: When it finally occurred to us, sometime in the middle of the night, early in the morning that we actually were going to get a majority, I mean it just, it was amazing.

MM: Amazing, with amazing consequences, for Cameron had made a promise, some three years earlier.

DC: We will give the British people a referendum, with a very simple in or out choice.

MM: A promise not just made but repeated, reinforced, copper-bottomed and goldplated in the Conservative election manifesto. Was this the first miscalculation, keeping his promise?

David Cameron's director of media, Sir Craig Oliver, says that fateful promise wasn't real choice, but an inevitability.

CO: There is absolutely no way that he could have remained leader of the Conservative party and not promised it in the manifesto. If he hadn't have done, I think that there would have been a leadership election, and he'd have been booted out, and somebody would have replaced him who would have done it, it was that bad in the Conservative Party at that time.

MM: It's perfectly possible Cameron thought he'd never be in a position to keep that promise, that he'd be out of office, out of power. Remember Kate Fall was thrilled to win, reality was more sobering.

KF: When you win an election you feel, you know, at least in tune with your electorate, because they have just given you this mandate. The economy was doing very well, and then we looked around and thought, 'Right we pledged to the end of 2017, but in between now and then, we have French elections, we have German elections, are their eyes going to be focused elsewhere if we wait?' So yes, we were very mindful of getting the timing right. Equally, David wanted to say some other things before his second term got totally embroiled in Europe.

CO: I think he felt it was a virus that had infected the Conservative Party, and it had taken over. So that's the reason why he had the referendum pretty early in what was his second term, because I think what he hoped was that he would move that big boulder out of the road of British politics.

MM: How hard could it be to shift that annoying boulder? Cameron, a born winner had one again, even when he thought he would lose. 'Lucky' seemed to be his secret middle name. If victory is always sweet, the fruits of victory are sometimes face-puckeringly sour, containing the seeds of destruction. The first warning: difficult conversations with some cabinet ministers, like Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers.

THERESA VILLIERS: It was very difficult to see myself on the side of a referendum arguing for continued membership, given the very serious concerns I had. I think the only thing that caused me to hesitate was I, out of, you know, respect for David Cameron, I wanted to see what the outcome of his negotiations would be with the EU. But, I was also very, on a personal level, reluctant to, you know, take the decision to be on the other side of the debate. And also, I assumed at that stage, it would mean resignation.

MM: That's not just an important point, it's two important points. Renegotiation and resignation. And two potential miscalculations. Cabinet ministers didn't yet know they would be allowed to campaign against the Prime Minister without resigning from the government. They did know Cameron was putting together an attempt to forge a new, different partnership with the European Union. If not something to rekindle the love story, something to draw the poison from the relationship. Our European Commission at the time, Lord Hill, Jonathan Hill, former Cabinet minister, one time political secretary to John Major knows Europe inside out. He doesn't think the ground was particularly well-prepared.

LORD HILL: Because the Europeans thought it was inconceivable that Britain would vote to leave, then when David Cameron said, 'Well, look, this is really, really serious,' people probably overestimated the extent to which that was a positioning statement rather than a real statement. And . . .

MM: They didn't believe him?

LH: Yeah.

MM: Craig Oliver also remembers a complacency, on the other side.

CO: I think the worst conversation, without a doubt, was in Davos in January of 2016. The Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte came in, and very, very quickly, they got to the conversation about Brexit, and he said, 'Look, you know, in Europe we know what's going to happen in your country, you came very close to, you know, Scotland leaving, but in the end people realised what's good for them and that's what will happen this time.'

MM: The former Liberal Democrat leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, says European leaders were bemused.

NICK CLEGG: They were slightly at a loss about why they should go the extra mile to give Cameron red meat for his backbenchers, when he constantly either told them or implied that he was going to win the referendum anyway. So, it's no wonder that actually what he ended up with was thin gruel.

MM: Was this a critical miscalculation. There's a serious dislocation here, a rare case of Cameron wrapped up in details, not reading the brutal domestic politics with enough clarity. What he wanted, and some of what he got, did address some big, practical and philosophical questions posed by British membership of the European Union, but it could never be enough for some of his Cabinet. Discussions at a senior level are often weirdly coded. Theresa Villiers had one conversation.

TV: I went to see him before Christmas, and we had a sort of general discussion where it was sort of all fairly carefully worded. And I think I was sending the signal that I, I feared I would have to end up on the Leave side, without trying to articulate that in, in the most clearest terms possible.

MM: And then she had another conversation.

TV: I reflected on it over the Christmas period, and . . . went to see David Cameron on the first day back, really . . . just because I felt at that stage I had to tell him that I would have to campaign for Leave.

MM: How did he react?

TV: As he always is, very sort of sensible, supportive, and, and actually, it was at that stage he said that he . . . believed that people with long-held principles on EU matters should be allowed to be on the other side of the debate from the government.

MM: By demanding public loyalty from ministers until he'd concluded the renegotiation, Cameron created a cliffhanger, when he knew full well that some ministers would hurl themselves off the cliff anyway. But it was worse than that, there was a clear domestic demand, at least from his party and the press, to deal with immigration from Europe. His rather wonkish deal didn't do much to curtail it, it didn't shoo the elephant from the room.

LH: Looking back now, it feels like a bit of a fool's errand, we allowed people to set the bar for the renegotiation incredibly high, and that bar was that 'you will have a fundamental reform of freedom of movement', and where the European Union was at that moment, that was never going to happen.

MM: Leading Eurosceptic, Dan Hannan thinks this was a vital moment.

DANIEL HANNAN: There was an almost slightly contemptuous kind of, 'Oh well, we'll have something that we call reforms, no one is going to look at the detail,' you know, 'the Eurosceptics are not really that bright.' And I think that tipped the balance, I think, a lot of people took from that whole process the idea that they were being disdained, that Britain was being treated contemptuously, and, above all, that the EU was incapable of reform.

MM: It all came to a head in Brussels, when the upright Mrs Merkel met a prone Prime Minister.

CO: David Cameron had a very bad back at that time and he was literally lying on the ground, and there was a knock on the door saying Mrs Merkel will be coming to see you now, and he was sort of like (*laughter in voice*) forcing himself to stand up, and I was trying to tidy up, because there was all sorts of cups of tea and . . . empty packets of Haribo all over the place. And then she sat down and came in and said, 'Right, what's it going to take', basically. And it was clear we cannot go much further on immigration. And at that point, I knew that the right-wing press were going to give it a raspberry, and the most important for us to do in media terms was to draw a line quite quickly under the renegotiation and then just fight the referendum.

MM: 'Call that a deal Dave?' Mocked the Daily Mail, saying it was a 'risible charade'. The Telegraph though it 'small beer', the Express 'paltry and pointless', the Times 'a ragbag, a fudge.' The clear reaction was not rapture, but rupture. But, before these headlines, more breaking news.

NEWSREADER: The BBC has been told that the Justice Secretary, Michael Gove, will campaign to leave the EU . . .

JOURNALIST: Was that a difficult decision, Mr Gove?

NEWSREADER: Around half a dozen Cabinet ministers are set to campaign against Mr Cameron, including the Prime Minister's personal friend Michael Gove . . .

NEWSREADER: The decision is a big blow for the Prime Minister, and a huge coup for those campaigning for the UK to leave the European Union, for years (*fades out*)

KF: He has strong opinions and he also had a close friendship with David. And I think those things weighed quite heavily and I think he was in the process of working out what he felt he had to do.

MM: How did David Cameron feel about what Michael Gove did?

KF: I think he was disappointed.

MM: Hurt?

KF: Possibly.

MM: It wasn't just friendship that had fractured. The establishment, the government, had split into two rival camps. Some of the old assumptions about referendums were knocked on the head. Losing Gove was perhaps the fourth miscalculation. Theresa Villiers.

TV: If you look at referendums around Europe and to an extent in '75 as well, in the UK, one of the sort of strongest cards the Remain side always have tried to play is to try and portray those who want to leave the EU as sort of on the fringes. If you have someone who is the Lord Chancellor or others who are members of the Cabinet as well saying that leaving the

EU is not only a feasible and practical thing to do, but also the right thing to do, I think that did make a difference.

MM: Boris then landed the next blow. The then-Mayor of London was outside the Cabinet. He'd been hemming and hawing as friends fought for the prize of his box office appeal. MEP Dan Hannan had a go for Leavers.

DH: He was very obviously agonising about it. And . . . absolutely torn on the issues, and was, was drilling down and asking very good questions about . . . whether the government's attempts to match up this or that deal were going to address anything, and . . . and in the end I think he, in common with most people, reached the view that if we couldn't get positive changes *then*, on the cusp of having a referendum on leaving, we were never going to get them if we stayed.

MM: On the other side, Cabinet Minister Oliver Letwin was deployed.

OLIVER LETWIN: I did make efforts, but I think in the end he came to the conclusion that he wanted to do what he did do and I don't think that any argument would have persuaded him otherwise.

MM: Inevitable in the end, or another miscalculation? Picture the scene: the Prime Minister had just presided over a difficult Cabinet meeting. He was about to speak to the nation on issue he said would define its future, but he was preoccupied.

LH: He was looking at his BlackBerry, and he had his elbows on his knees and glasses on the end of his nose, and he sort of looked up at me and he said, 'Well, it looked like out', and he didn't say to me at that moment it was Boris, but it was obviously that it was Boris. And four hours later, after we'd had the Cabinet, after he'd gone out into Downing Street and effectively fired the gun on the start of the referendum campaign, David Cameron rang me up and said, 'You haven't told anybody that Boris is for Out yet?' and I said, 'No', he said, 'Well good, because he's just sent me a text saying he could be for Remain.' And then, about ten to fifteen minutes before Boris gave that very, very chaotic press conference, David Cameron got a text from him saying, 'I have decided to go for Leave, it was a tough decision, but I believe that Brexit will be crushed like the toad beneath the harrow. But it was very clear in that moment that it was a very fine decision for Boris, and it was also very clear in that moment that he never thought that they would actually win.

MM: David Cameron followed the playbook of another Prime Minister, Labour's Harold Wilson, some 40 years earlier, lifting Cabinet responsibility, then a swift renegotiation, then the referendum. We looked at this in detail in our second episode. And one thing that emerged was Wilson's cunning – he kept aloof from the fray. Cameron entered in with enthusiasm, but still pulled his punches, not wanting to stoke a Tory civil war. We're going to skip lightly over the campaign itself, but it's worth noting former friends weren't so worried. Cameron kept to Marquis of Queensbury rules in a bloodied knife-fight.

CO: I don't think I would use the word 'betrayal', because I think that feels like over-egging it. There was one afternoon where Boris and Michael had written a 5000-word letter that they'd given to the Sunday Times, and in it they said that David Cameron was corroding public trust on immigration. And I remember David Cameron who's known for his equanimity, being incredibly upset about that, and saying to me, 'Look, I just can't believe these people I've worked with, spent time with socially, are accusing me of deliberately lying to people, I can't believe that going on.'

MM: If a Conservative election victory had been a surprise, the next moment was a stunner. A shock which still shakes our politics.

DAVID DIMBLEBY: If you've just joined us, the people of this country want to leave the EU, and that has all sorts of ramifications (*fades out*)

MM: The UK's European Commissioner wasn't awake to hear that.

LH: One of my children woke me up at about three in the morning and said the result had happened. So I got up and got on the first Eurostar back to Brussels.

MM: And what were your initial reflections?

LH: I hadn't expected that result, so I was completely erm . . . surprised by that, and the thing that I did think straightaway was that as the figurehead in the European system, I shouldn't just carry on as though nothing had changed. So, the first thing I did when I went back, I resigned.

MM: He wasn't, of course, the only one to resign.

KF: David took Ed Llewellyn, chief of staff, George Osborne and, and I down to his study to say . . . (*fragment of word, or word unclear*) 'And I'll be resigning in the morning.'

MM: Did you try to argue him out of it?

KF: No, I didn't, none of us did, because although we'd sort of played through scenarios before, we knew that on the night, or in the morning, a lose is a lose, if you're fighting to represent your country with a certain political belief and you lose that mandate, it was not possible for him to go on.

MM: Was Britain's destiny decided by the arrogance of a man who'd never lost anything? Who's belief in his own abilities outweighed the political realities, putting party and power before principle, refusing to fight off those demons besetting his party. Or a man who faced up to an inevitable moment and made it his own, who dealt with a nagging, growing ache and, for the first time in 40 years, gave his countrymen a choice? Perhaps both. Nick Clegg.

NC: I came across countless voters who said, you know, 'Why are we asked to vote on this? Either like or loathe the European Union, but there are so many more important things,' and they weren't daft, they knew they'd been asked this because of the internal spats within the Conservative Party. This is the great odd thing about this, that the referendum, which is a vote by the people was, in a sense, put into the hands of the people because the politicians couldn't settle this argument amongst themselves. And that's why so many voters thought, 'Well, sod you, in that case we're just going to vote against the status quo as we see it.'

MM: But Oliver Letwin feels this wasn't about solving a Conservative conundrum, but a question which divides Britain itself on uneasy lines.

OL: The truth is, this is a very complicated issue where there are real advantages and real disadvantages of any particular course of action, and when there are differences of view of that kind, there's no particular reason why they should run with the sort of broadly left-right distinctions between Conservative and Labour parties that otherwise bring people in to a particular fold. So, it's not surprising that this cuts across the party divide.



MM: That divide, of course, still haunts our politics. We've highlighted some moments where Cameron took fateful decisions, but does Craig Oliver think those demons could have been kept on the leash? Could things have been different?

CO: You probably need to invent a time machine and go back 40 years, and actually people who believe in the European Union needed to make the case for this international institution. Those arguments were not made over decades, and then in the final few weeks, it's not surprising that actually when you pulled back the sheet, you realise people weren't happy with these things and those arguments had not been won.

MM: Luckily, we have such a time machine – next time, the last time, we'll be looking back over the series and our 45-year relationship and asking, 'Did it have to end like this? Was Europe the poison under the skin of British politics, bound to burst out one way or another? Was it just a Tory virus, an infection made worse by the need to keep one party together in the light of a concerted campaign? Or were the UK and the rest of the EU set on such different parts that a parting of the ways was inevitable. Was de Gaulle right?' A certain idea of Britain, next time, the last time, on Brexit: A Love Story?'.

## 13. An Island Nation

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MARK MARDELL: This final episode will begin as it will end, in tears.

LORD ARMSTRONG: (*emotional*) It was a very moving moment.

MM: Ted Heath, in triumph played Bach, after MPs voted to join the Common Market.

LA: It was saying something about how he felt about being back in Europe.

MM: In every beginning dwells a certain magic, and many potential endings.

MICHAEL HOWARD: I kind of cling to the belief, although it's completely academic that there was a different course that the European Union could have followed. That it could have become a much more flexible kind of operational altogether.

MM: I'm Mark Mardell, and this is the last episode of Brexit: A Love Story? We've looked back at our 45 year relationship with the European project, we've heard the inside story of those who were there, and asked if our future was written in the past. Well was it? Was the relationship always doomed? There's a temptation to look back and see all roads leading away from Rome, a danger in looking back with historical hindsight and seeing destiny in destination. We'll try to resist. We heard from Lord Armstrong, Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Ted Heath. It was a moment of high emotion.

LA: There were lots of parties, but before he went to any of them, he went upstairs in the house at Downing Street, and he sat down at his clavichord and he played the First Prelude from the 48 Preludes and Fugues by JS Bach. (*sounding emotional*) And it was saying something about how he felt about being back in Europe. It was a very moving moment.

MM: And you were moved as well?

LA: (*sounding emotional*) Very much so . . . I still am to think about it.

MM: But this decision was already late in the day. While other countries forged the Common Market, we had dithered. It's striking how the debate more than 60 years ago mirrors the one today. Should we be outside the project, but in a European free trade area? Or a customs union? Or asking for a good deal on trade tariffs, rather than getting tangled in what the Foreign Office described as a woolly hotchpotch. Lord Hannay, former Ambassador to the UN, once our man in Brussels, negotiated to get us in, in 1972, too late, he thinks.

LORD HANNAY: If we'd gone in at the start, the agricultural policy would have not have been the shape that it was, and it certainly wouldn't have borne so heavily on us. There wouldn't have been the same fisheries policy, because we would have been a member, and the budget would not have been structured in the way it was, because we would have had to be part of the budget treaty that was agreed before we joined in 1970. So yes, we missed a huge opportunity, because we didn't think it was a huge opportunity.

MM: For many, more Europe was an answer to two world wars – not dry history then, but vivid personal experience, as Shirley Williams recalls.

SHIRLEY WILLIAMS: They all had memories of Hitler and Mussolini, I mean, I did *vaguely*, but I was a child when Hitler came to power and so forth. For them, that difference of maybe

20 years was important, because they could always see Mussolini and Hitler the sort of people who created the destruction of democracy.

MM: But it only took couple of years for the question to be put to the people for the first time, in 1975. Should we stay, or should we go? A weighty matter which helped the Labour Party ease its civil war. A woman who'd become famous for saying 'No' to Europe was arguing for a yes.

MARGARET THATCHER: We have always been a party that has recognised that Britain has a future in Europe.

ADVERTISEMENT?: On Thursday, we are being asked to vote for the first time in our long history in a referendum.

VOX POP MALE: During the war we stood on our own feet, I don't see why we shouldn't stand on our own feet now. What have they got for us? Nothing. And what have they done for us? Nothing.

VOX POP FEMALE: I think if we come out, we will be a country that turns in on itself. And I think that would break our hearts as a country.

MM: Former Conservative leader and Home Secretary, Lord Howard, who went on to become a leading Eurosceptic, was then a leading member of the Campaign for the Common Market.

MICHAEL HOWARD: Then I thought it offered advantages to us, economic advantages to us, and it was a very different organisation, and it didn't seem then, perhaps wasn't then, a threat to the nation state.

MM: The lady too, changed her mind – perhaps. There was an ambivalence there, in and out of office she delighted in doing battle for Britain, an enthusiast for the single market, scornful of preparations for a single currency. The Bruges Speech sent a message to evolving, integrating Europe, 'So far, no further.'

MT: Europe will be stronger precisely because it has France as France, Spain as Spain, Britain as Britain, each with its own customs, traditions and identity. It would be folly to try to fit them into some sort of identikit European personality.

MM: But let's slow things down, rewind a bit. Was Mrs Thatcher living proof that Charles de Gaulle was right? The French President of an earlier era twice said 'non' and blocked Britain from joining, arguing, 'England, in effect, is insular, she is maritime, linked to the most diverse and often the most distant countries, she has very marked and very original habits and traditions.' Was our history written in sand and sea, made by our geography? Our last European Commissioner, Lord Hill, a former cabinet minister, thinks there's something in that.

LORD HILL: For all those other countries, much as there were things that irritated them, much as things were not perfect, it was better than what they have lived through in the last 50 to 100 years. So they can all see that being in the EU added something for them. And I think at some level we all feel it took something away.

MM: Michael Howard agrees.

MH: The European Union was born out of the Second World War, and our experience of the Second World War was different from pretty well everyone else's. They were all either invaded, or did the invading, or were neutral, which was, in some respects, possibly even

worse, and we were none of those things. We look back on the Second World War as our finest hour. That is a really big difference, given that it was the Second World War that was largely the impetus for the creation of the European Union.

MM: The British diplomat with probably the widest and deepest knowledge of the European Union, going back 25 years, is Sir Ivan Rogers. Among other jobs, once chief of staff to the President of the Commission, Tony Blair's Head of European Policy, and David Cameron's negotiator as our ambassador to the EU. In his first broadcast interview since resigning last year, he told me de Gaulle's view underplays our interest in Europe.

SIR IVAN ROGERS: Britain has always had a maritime and global view and always should. It's always, though, been, for many centuries actually, European player. So the two are in my view indissoluble - Britain is and always will be outward looking and Atlanticist and global, and always have a perspective beyond just the European continent. But it always is going to be a central player on the European continent, and with central interests on the European continent.

MM: Mrs Thatcher certainly was a central player on the continent. Part of her legacy: the handbag, swung with great vigour against continental perfidy, each strike applauded and amplified by an eager press. Lord Hannay.

LH: She was playing a twin track. Because, as always, British prime ministers – and she's not the only one – for domestic political reasons, they didn't want to make those sort of statements at home. So, they sometimes made them abroad, but you'll find it's astonishing how often they made the speeches that contained them somewhere on the other side of the Channel, and it's very sad, in my view, because the story to be told in favour of what these prime ministers did, when they were in office, in Europe, is a good one, but nobody knows it.

MM: There was another legacy. Mrs Thatcher's defenestration in part over Europe was a matricide which left wounds in the Conservative Party which could never heal. And Europe was the cause and symbol of those who loved the lady still. The Maastricht rebellion wrecked John Major's government, some say Europe became a virus in the Conservative bloodstream, recurring in every generation, which gave them fevers and nightmares, which proved contagious to the whole country, poisoning political debate.

MH: Well, the problem was, as time went on, it became increasingly difficult to argue that the European Union was not a threat to the nation state. And I suppose championing the cause of the nation state has always been an element in the make-up of the Conservative party. And so I think that is what has led to the increasing difficulty.

REPORTER: The tiny town of Maastricht will be the scene of some big decisions this week, as the leaders of the EC try to bring the countries of Europe even closer together.

REPORTER 2: Tory rebels are fighting on, around 20 of them today supporting an amendment which would wreck the government's plans (*fades out*)

MM: The Maastricht treaty is remembered for dramatic rebellions in the Commons, but perhaps it's true importance was John Major's opt-outs. Britain was on a path, of opting out of this, that and the other. Sir Ivan Rogers.

IR: We were outside the monetary union and had a unique status and a unique opt out from it. We were outside the Schengen zone and permanently outside it. We had a pick and choose relationship in the justice and home affairs field, than any other member state. So for continental European elites, they felt, well, Britain already had a completely unique

relationship and a completely unique type of membership of the European Union. So what else did these people want? You know, how much more special could we make it for them in order to keep them happy and remain within it?

MM: The European project was fluid, ever-changing, seeking to evolve into something more than it was, looking to bind nations into something less than a country, but more than a mere institution. Enemies are quick to point out it won't take no for an answer, look at the Dutch, French and Irish referendums. But even friends, like Tony Blair, see some fundamental problems in its origin.

TONY BLAIR: Because it developed in the aftermath of the Second World War, where people felt that the great risk was the powerful nation state, and in particular the German powerful nation state, the institutions of Europe developed in a way to curtail the nation state. But as time has gone on, a) people don't fear Germany in that way anymore, and b) the nation state in a world that is globalising and coming together becomes something want to hang onto, even at the same time as they acknowledge the need for institutions of cooperation, like the European Union.

MM: Those bitter arguments about forgotten initials like the ERM and names like the ECU, which tore at the heart of Mrs Thatcher's government, were about how to approach a new European project, then seen by many British politicians as a vain continental fantasy, to be indulged, but they were in fact the precursor to the euro, now a currency used by 330 million people in at least 19 countries. Lord Hill thinks when it became a reality, we became truly detached from the project.

LH: That set us on a path to a more mistrustful relationship with our European friends, because as a big country, a big player, we were no longer part of some of the most important economic discussions going on, and we developed a sense that the rest of them were always out to try and get us, on our key economic interests.

MM: For others on the inside, like Sir Ivan Rogers, this was indeed the defining moment, a project which, for all the angst, all the battles, had been dominated by British ideas, by Britain, moved on – leaving the British as naysayers on the side lines.

IR: After the advent of the euro, and above all after the financial crisis brought into question the sustainability and the survival of the euro, and after the migration crisis then emerges, which brings into question the sustainability of Schengen, we ceased to be a central player on either of those questions, because we decided to stay out of both of those projects.

MM: Britain, in its far-flung outer-orbit of the European project was in a unique position - part of the single market and the customs union, outside many of the other most important projects, from a single currency to the border-free area. There is a common complaint: 'we were tricked, only asked to join a common market, which turned into a political union.' Yet that determination was always there, it's just as true to say that many British politicians wilfully ignored the way the rules and markets, rights and responsibilities were two sides of a single coin. That economic advantage and grand ambitions were always conjoined, intertwined, and that the political has always had primacy. They're still doing it. Does that mean that the strains that led to the referendum were inevitable? Sir Ivan Rogers?

IR: For many insiders, it was possible to look ahead ten to fifteen years and think the existential question is not about whether we take the jump into monetary union, but whether you can construct a European Union which non-monetary union members like the UK could remain comfortable, or whether that was no longer going to be possible.

MM: We've put Europe centre stage, but despite all the dramas it wasn't often a priority for our politicians, except for those who loathed it. For others, it was more like a nuisance to be tiptoed around. Tony Blair.

TB: The public has always been in two minds about Europe. And, I mean, I did make the case for Europe, and possibly I could have done more, but I'm not sure it would have moved the needle much. And then frankly whatever government had been in power, at any point of time in Britain's relationship since 1973 with Europe, if you'd held a referendum it would have been touch and go.

MM: Touch and go? It was of course 'go' – out, no. The referendum was held against a background of Eastern European immigration here, perhaps muddled in some minds with Middle Eastern immigration over there. Against a background of a profound euro crisis. Remember, the term Brexit was only coined after extensive talk about Grexit. Against a background of Tory jitters at the rise of UKIP. Would any leader have had to hold a referendum eventually? Some think if it wasn't Cameron, he'd have been replaced as Conservative leader. If he'd lost the election, Labour would have been forced down the same route. But the outcome then? You just can't game all the variables. Perhaps a better question: could any leader have won it, at that moment, in that year? Mrs Thatcher's advisor Charles Powell, Lord Powell doesn't think there did have to be a referendum. He thinks she'd have been a lot more canny.

LORD POWELL: No, I think we could, could've stayed, and er . . . partly if Europe had developed in a different direction, partly if we had negotiated harder and longer for more opt-outs and so on. So I don't see it being inevitable that we would have left. But I suppose if you go back to the origins of the European Union, Britain's decision to stand apart in the early years, then you do have to say from the beginning there was never quite the conviction that other European countries, or at least other core European countries have, that building a European Union was the best way to ensure peace in Europe.

MM: What has been clear, from episode to episode is not only the great currents of history, but the power of personality and ambition. Heath, Wilson, Thatcher, Blair, all left a very individual mark. That ambition may still matter, for the story isn't over. But this series almost is. I told you it would end in tears. After the vote to leave, our European Commissioner, Lord Hill, went back to Brussels, resigned and endured an emotional month.

LH: People often tend to think of Brussels of being the home of faceless, soulless bureaucrats and machine politicians, but actually it's a much more emotional and sentimental place than that. And so it was a strangely emotional time, there were lots of tears in meetings, and great . . . I mean, genuine sadness.

MM: Some are shedding tears still, of sorrow and bitter anger, others tears of joy, perhaps more are bystanders, wondering where this new path will lead, if our future destiny is written in this present.

LH: On one level, Britain actually has tried the hard to be a good European, for, you know, over 40 years. We have made the best fist that we could have this, we have achieved a lot together, but ultimately, when push came to shove our history and our political traditions and our geography and our outlook on the world and how we are as a people is just different and we can't make it work, we've tried very hard all this time, but that's it.

MM: A love story? Can't live with her, can't live without her. Europe, our continent, our curse, our destiny, has shaped our history from Caesar to 1066, to Napoleon, through the world wars that shaped our 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the European project, that's something else. A love story? Or

cold calculation, when all the passion was on the other side. On the continent, those who wanted to make something brand-new in the world, and here those who always wanted to break it off in the name of sovereignty. Our relationship with Europe has dominated much of my working life, and probably will for the rest of it. It's always seemed dangerous, but rarely seemed doomed. But then, history is not a mirror that lets you peer around corners and glimpse the future. But perhaps it should have shown those who wanted it to work that the Gulf of purpose and position between us and them were growing wider under new strains, and that Herculean effort was needed to keep us together. For those who thought that this was never our destiny and feared it could be our doom, they did work with passion, always bashing away at the weak spots. For them, Brexit was a love story, one which learnt to speak its name loudly and clearly. But in 45 years the tendrils that bind have snaked around our nations. An operation to part Siamese twins, saving both lives, looks less the fraught than this separation. Brexit, a love story? The question, the question mark will remain. It isn't over yet.