

# FULL ENGLISH BREXIT

James Gray MP

*"Whether we like it or not, Brexit will happen at 11 PM on 29 March, 2019. That much is sure, and is what the people voted for in a free and fair Referendum. What is less clear, and something which only the bravest of soothsayers would have a shot at predicting, is what Britain will be like after that."*

So says long-time Brexiteer British Parliamentarian, James Gray. Much of this book reflects aspects of his twenty-one years in Parliament – as a backbencher, defence and foreign affairs specialist, and fulfilling a variety of front bench jobs while the Tories were in Opposition (as a Whip, Shadow Defence Minister, Shadow Minister for Rural Affairs, and Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland). In this groundbreaking book, he tries to lay out what he thinks – or perhaps hopes – Britain will look like over the generations to come. He touches on almost every aspect of British life – from defence and foreign affairs, to the countryside, universities and public services. He looks at Parliament, business and the economy, international trade; at overseas aid, security and law and order. Above all else, Gray lays out his thoughts about the essential ethos of Britain and the British; and what we will therefore make of our EU-free future. It's a wide-ranging, readable, light-hearted and intensely personal stimulus to debate over what the future holds for Britain.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Gray is the (Conservative) MP for North Wiltshire. A member of Mr Speaker's Panel of Chairmen, James has a deep interest in Parliament and the Constitution.

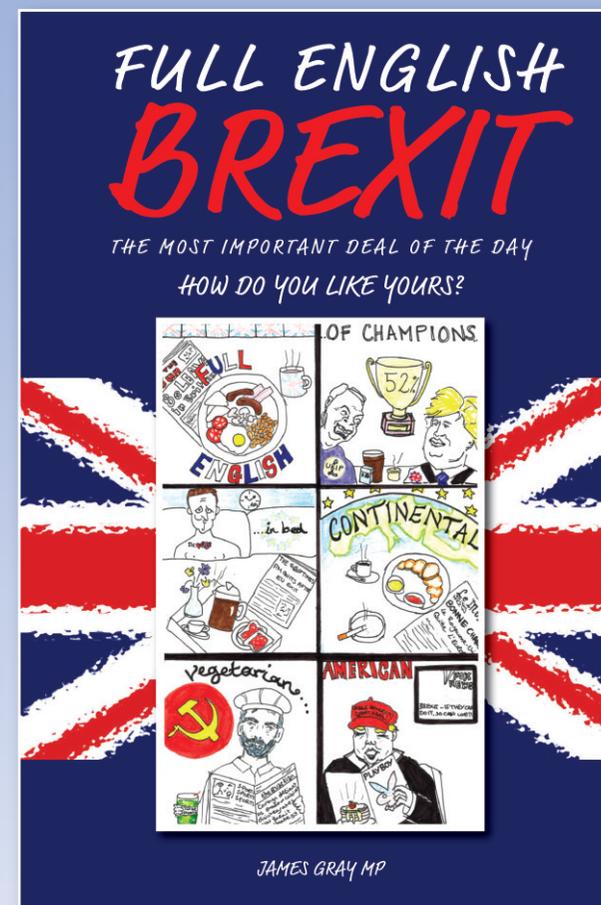
A Scot by birth and upbringing, he was educated in Glasgow (High School and University) and Christ Church, Oxford. He had a fifteen year career in shipping and the City of London before Parliament. He served for seven years in the Honourable Artillery Company, and later on its Court of Assistants, and in Parliament is Chairman of the All Party Group for the Armed Forces and the Armed Forces Parliamentary Trust. He is a graduate of the Royal College of Defence Studies, a Visiting Fellow of St Antony's College; Oxford, he served until recently on the House of Commons Defence Committee, and chaired its sub-committee on Defence in the Arctic, and is Patron of a charity which sends boxes to our troops who are overseas at Christmas time.

He has published several books: three on shipping and the futures markets (one of which won a Lloyds of London Book Prize); *Crown vs Parliament: Who Takes Britain to War?* (which won an RCDS prize); and more recently *Poles Apart* (2014) and *Who Takes Britain to War?* (2015). James and his wife, Philippa, live near Bath.

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Above: Warsaw, Poland.

Above: Royal Wootton Bassett Repatriation.

Left: Scott at work in his cabin, Antarctica, 1913.

Below: Example pages

### 3. 23 June 2016

*"If Britain must choose between Europe and the open sea, she must always choose the open sea..." (Winston Churchill)*

Into that Perfect Storm comes Brexit. That something massive, tectonic, history-shaping, generational, happened on Thursday 23 June, 2016 (when the British people voted to leave the European Union) is obvious. Much harder – nay probably impossible – is to be clear about what happened, nor why, nor its short, medium or long term consequences for Britain (clearly), for Europe (without a doubt) and therefore very probably for the world as a whole.

The 'Remain' camp had predicted catastrophe if we left the EU. They forecasted a collapsing Stock Exchange (as I write it is trading at record high levels), a disaster for the pound (ignoring the fact that a slightly weaker pound is actually very beneficial for exports, and therefore overall of benefit to the economy as a whole); and they promised an 'Emergency Budget' to stave off an economic collapse equal in severity to the slump in 1920s America (yet the Governor of the Bank of England who had been one of the greatest nay-sayers now seems to believe that Brexit is perfectly manageable). They anticipated a quasi-racist, neo-Nazi eviction of all non-UK passport holders (blithely ignoring the fact that industries like health, long-term care, catering, building and plumbing all depend for their very survival on workers from overseas). The then Chancellor of the Exchequer, (of less than blessed memory) George Osborne, rather bizarrely claimed that house prices "will dive by 18% if we leave." It is hard to know how anyone could make such an exact prediction. And anyhow, restraining the prices of houses is something which the very same Chancellor separately espoused to help first time buyers. The end result, of course, is that house prices are pretty much as strong post-referendum as they were before it. The only things the gloom-mongers in the Remain camp failed to predict as a consequence of a vote to leave was Armageddon, a plague of frogs and the death of the first-born (although some of them came very close to it on various occasions). President of the EU, Donald Tusk, for example, famously opined "As a historian, I fear that Brexit could be the beginning of the destruction of not only the EU but also Western political civilisation in its entirety." Enough said...

### **BRITAIN STRONGER IN EUROPE**

This is not the place for a Brexit campaign post-mortem. But history will record that the Remain campaign (fetchingly called Britain Stronger in Europe, or BSE for short, ignoring the coincidence of name with Bovine Spongiform

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Encephalopathy, BSE, or mad-cow disease) was a disaster. Stretch your mind back to the £9 million spent issuing a dreary document of 'facts' to each household which was both too early to have much effect, and widely perceived as blatant Government propaganda, and therefore self-defeating. Recall No 10 issuing President Obama with a 'line to take', including the uniquely British expression "end of the queue" (an American would have said "back of the line"). These and a hundred other blunders threw their campaign away.



Brexit protest.

Prime Minister David Cameron mishandled the whole episode. He it was who allowed the referendum to be included in the Conservative Party Manifesto in the first place, presumably in the sure and certain hope that rather than a majority government we would have another coalition with the Liberal Democrats who would never allow such a referendum to take place. He then mishandled the 'negotiation' with Europe, and the subsequent Referendum campaign itself, fatally besmirching his own name and securing his legacy as 'the PM who fouled up over Europe.' (Blair floundered over Iraq, Maggie Thatcher over local government finance, Churchill was bizarrely punished for winning the War. As Enoch Powell once famously observed 'All political careers end in failure.')

The Leave campaign, by contrast, was well planned and executed, and appealed to a range of people over a diversity of issues. It drew those with a general dislike of Brussels and an intuitive longing to regain our Sovereignty (amongst Tory voters

### 18. Britain's Green and Pleasant Land

*"Oh, to be in England now that April's there. And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning unaware, that the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf, while the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough. In England – now."*

Browning's immortal words crystallize the Englishman's relationship with the countryside.

Despite the fact that very few of us live there, and even fewer work on the land, we Brits love the countryside. In France, the more successful you are, the more you move towards the centre of towns and cities. The countryside and rural villages are consigned to the peasantry and to the eccentric English who seem to want to spend huge amounts of money buying uninhabitable French hovels. In England, by contrast, the more successful you are the further out you move - first to suburbia, then to a country village or town, ultimately for the very few, to the farm or Cotswold Manor House surrounded by a few thousand rolling acres.

We mainly live in towns yet we love the countryside and protect it fiercely. Our houses look out over the bypass to the green fields beyond thereby allowing us to think that we live in the countryside; and if we are meeting friends at the weekend what could be better than 'a little pub I know out in the country near here?' The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the Countryside Alliance, RSPB, National Trust – all are thriving, all symptomatic of our rather romantic love affair with rural Britain.

Yet despite all of that, we really have very little clue about farming, and the brutalities of life in the country. Badgers and foxes are cuddly and wise, no matter what damage they may do to cows and chickens respectively. Deer are baby Bambis, wholly ignoring the wholesale destruction of valuable crops which they may wreak. 28,000 cows are slaughtered every year because of the drive to eradicate badger-borne Bovine TB; yet a few badgers humanely destroyed (and by that means themselves spared a horrible death from TB deep inside their set) causes outcry amongst some, and at very least an uneasy feeling amongst most of us no matter how committed we are to the cull. We are blind to the fate of hedgehogs and bumble bees, which are always notably absent from an area inhabited by a large number of badgers, having been ritually slaughtered by that most efficient of killers, Bertie Brock the wise old badger. Anyone who has seen the devastation a fox can wreak in a chicken run for no reason but the satisfaction of killing

BRITAIN'S GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND



Bratton White Horse, Wiltshire.

chickens, whose carcasses they very often leave lying around, would happily throttle the stinking vermin which Basil Brush in reality is. Yet we love foxes and badgers and would rather throttle the farmer who would kill them to safeguard their own livelihood.

We have really very little clue about the link between Easter lambs frolicking in the lush green pastures and our Sunday roasts; our stomachs would turn at everyday sights in the abattoir. We urban Brits are thoroughly soppy about animals. And we are astonishingly unsympathetic to farmers despite their magnificent role as guardians of the landscapes we love, and providers of the high quality and affordable food on our tables which we demand.

Just as there is a curious disconnect between our love for the 'brave boys and girls' in our armed forces and a hatred of what they have to do on active service overseas; so there is a particularly schizophrenic disconnect between our love of the countryside and its produce, yet our mild (or worse) disapproval of what farmers have to do to achieve it.

Throughout the EU Referendum Campaign there was talk (much of it apocalyptic) about the effect which leaving the EU would have on British farming. It would be 'the end of farming as we know it' we were told. Instead of the CAP comfort blanket with guaranteed acreage subsidies to farmers, guaranteed by those dozy individuals in Brussels, we would have our own MPs in Westminster deciding how/whether/if farmers should get anything at all. "What if we have a Labour government and they give all the money to schools and hospitals?" was the regular question.