

Words on the Street

Simon Chater and Rosemary Schonfeld



Child, seeing our badges on the stand:

**“Ooh, badges!
Mum, can I have one?”**

Mother:

**“No darling,
they’re *political!*”**

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Foreword

This book is dedicated to the volunteers of Devon for Europe’s street stalls. Evident on every page are the energy, commitment, courage, compassion and humour they gave to our cause – the fight to keep Britain at the heart of Europe.

A kind of diary of Brexit, the book mainly consists of two ingredients originally posted on Facebook: street stall reports by Simon and Brexit haikus¹ by Rosemary. We were on a street stall together when we discovered that friends, family and a few Devon for Europe supporters were separately telling us that, once the fight was over, we should collate our writings and publish them. It made sense to join forces to do that – and Words on the Street is the result.

We’ve book-ended our offerings with two poems by another keen volunteer, Loran Waite, and are grateful to her for permitting their use. Scattered throughout are the headings of newspaper articles that “anchor” our writings in current events. We’ve also included some spreads that capture the excitement of the big London marches many of us went on. There is plenty more we could have included, but we had to draw the line somewhere. Please forgive the many significant omissions, especially of stalls beyond the south of the county, where

Simon mainly volunteered. We hope to inspire others to come forward with recollections of activities in other parts of Devon.

Where appropriate, we’ve suppressed or changed people’s names to protect their privacy. We have, however, listed the volunteers at the back of the book. The photos, unless otherwise specified, are by Simon. Lastly, if this book looks good, that’s down to Simon’s wife Christel, who is a graphic designer. We’re grateful to her for her skills and advice, as well as her hard work.

Britain’s dysfunctional political system meant that the Remain cause lost its fight to stop Brexit. But here in Devon we had a great time losing – there is plenty of fun in these pages, alongside the sorrow and pain. And we achieved much else along the way: we helped build a movement across the county that is now over 17,000 strong; we shifted the debate on Brexit at local level; we sustained morale in the Remain community; and we raised awareness among Devon’s MPs and opinion makers. These achievements are valuable assets for future campaigning.

We hope you enjoy this record of our experiences during a unique period in British history.

Simon Chater and Rosemary Schonfeld
20 August 2020

¹ The haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry consisting of three lines. The first and last lines have five syllables while the middle one has seven.

Winter Campaigning

An English market town, cold, sunless, still.
They stroll, else hurry purposeful among the dreary shops,
Christmas forgotten. I stand in blue and gold,
come tell us what you think, add stickers to our board –
bright colours pierce the clouded scene, and interest piqued,
some step towards us, vibrant with support,
while others shrug straight past, a frown, a 'y're all right';
so much apathy, so much confusion:
what stories would they tell?

Your views count, we say. Debates, opinions, dance
with weary pleasure that we're here, spikes of aggression.
Old man stares, in strangely coloured mac
of duck-egg blue. A rubber face that's hard to read,
nose squashed, with corner wart. I smile hello, he's quizzical –
hostile maybe, as many are, but no. Gentle, seems kind –
'but don't you think we should be on our own?';
A dangerous world, I say, a bloc is best;
he carries on, 'but don't you think?' ... A man behind he sees
and making space – 'I'll go now, thank you for the chat,'
exuding loneliness. But maybe not –
a warm long-married wife at home perhaps:
what stories could they tell?

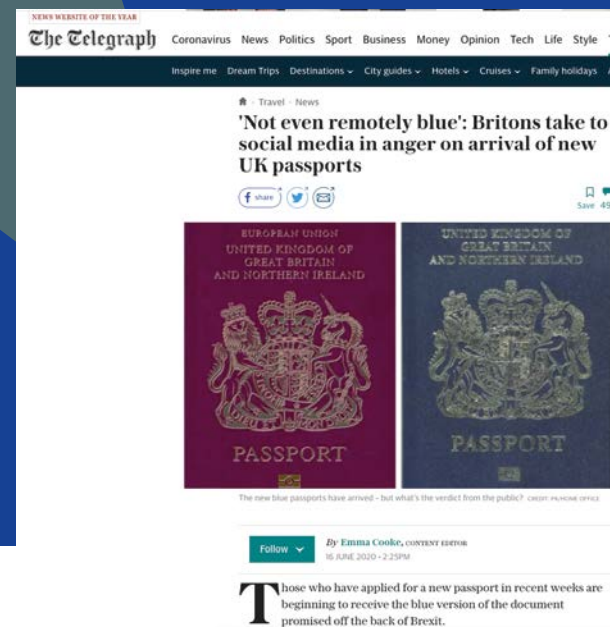
So much apathy, so much anger, so much confusion;
the stories we can't know.

Clearing our pitch as volunteers disperse,
couple approach, with small boys well-behaved,
'we'd hoped to talk.' OK, my colleague says –
'I don't know anything, I didn't vote.' He's neat and smart,
thick orange hair all waving to one side:
'the working class don't understand, so talk to us.'
Their children's future, for a start –
but everything we try, they shake their heads,
position clearer than they will admit.
Touching my arm, 'admire you though, for doing this,'
a friendly smile belied by mocking eyes.
How many times do we respond each week,
with cheerful 'good to meet you, bye!'
while actually he makes me feel uneasy:
where will our country go...

So much anger, so much confusion, so much apathy.
The stories I don't know.
I'm tired, but run to catch the others
loading the van.

Loran Waite, Devon for Europe volunteer

Seventy years' peace Why should I care about that? I want blue passports



24 June 2017: Kingsbridge

On the street in Kingsbridge this morning with two other volunteers, campaigning for Devon for Europe.

We signed up over 60 new members during an intensive 3-hour session. Leavers seemed more willing to engage than they did a few months back. Most were hard core, citing immigration as their main reason; but a few indicated doubts and said they might vote Remain if given a second chance. One Leaver joined our group, saying they were willing to engage in debate with us (oh you lovely, brave person – a special warm welcome to you, if you read this!).

Almost everyone agreed that the country was in turmoil and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Very few still seemed so support Mrs May.

My conclusion? Public opinion is on the turn. Let's keep protesting, keep engaging, keep arguing; we will win this struggle for the soul of our country.



“We voted and that’s it now, isn’t it?”



12 August 2017: Tavistock

At Devon for Europe’s street stall in Tavistock today, with another volunteer and interested members of the public.

One of the most interesting exchanges I had during three hours of energetic campaigning was with a Leaver who was wobbling. He agreed with me that the Leave project wasn’t going well but came out with the often voiced belief that “We voted and that’s it now, isn’t it? We have to go along with it.” I said “No we don’t,” and explained with the analogy of buying a house: “You view a beautiful looking house on a fine day and fall in love with the dream of living there. You put in an offer and, rather to your surprise, it’s accepted! Then, a few weeks later, you

have a survey done and, oh dear, the house turns out to be riddled with dry rot. Would you seriously argue that you have to go ahead with the purchase anyway, now that reality has dawned?”

“Oh,” the man replied, “That’s exactly the experience my son is going through at the moment!” “Well there you are then,” I said. He still hesitated, so I invited him to join Devon for Europe just to view the discussions. “See what you think and challenge us where you think we’ve got things wrong,” I said, and added: “I promise we’ll treat your views with respect.” And then and there he took the pen and form from my hand and signed up to join us!

**Article fifty
Triggered with nothing in place.
How come this madness?**

How foolish was that? To lose twenty-seven friends With one reckless act



28 October 2017: Ashburton

My thanks to fellow Devon for Europe volunteers for a successful street-stall in Ashburton earlier today.

Despite a late start we signed up 63 people in barely two hours and at times it felt as if we were deluged with willing joiners! What I noticed was that people signed up quickly, with far less questioning of whether it was worthwhile. "It's too late, isn't it?" seems to have vanished as an objection.

My most interesting exchange of the day was with a small antique dealer opposite the Post Office whose shop boldly proclaims its pro-EU stance. I love it when small businesses nail their colours to the mast – it takes courage, as there could be a loss of business.

So thank you Mr Wood, you're a brave man and a great soul. We hope your business prospers as a result. (Do visit him, he has lots of fun stuff in his shop.)





18 November 2017: Exeter

Wow! Something is stirring out there.

Admittedly, the Christmas shopping crowds came thick and fast; and admittedly, we were a strong team, both numerically and in terms of our persuasiveness; but: at our Devon for Europe street stall in Exeter today we signed up 141 new joiners! "By far a new record" as one of our regular volunteers put it. Certainly double the normal number, which is usually 60 or 70. People fell over themselves to join. The badges went well (particularly the "Think" one!), and some of the young ones loved the "Bollocks to Brexit" stickers.



Many of us had wonderful exchanges, my favourites being with a trio of women representing three generations, furious about the lies they had been told and the future of the health service; and with an elderly Jewish lady, just out of Synagogue, who could not buy a badge but gladly accepted one as a gift. Her grandfather had fled from Latvia in the early 1900s. She was full of scorn for today's ignorant and arrogant politicians.

Indeed, scorn and contempt were the flavour of the day. At last, people are getting worked up. Thanks to our nine volunteers, who made a magnificent, eloquent and passionate team. At this rate, we cannot but win this long and difficult national argument!



A little child cried
 “The Emperor has no clothes”
 Raving Lefty Lie!

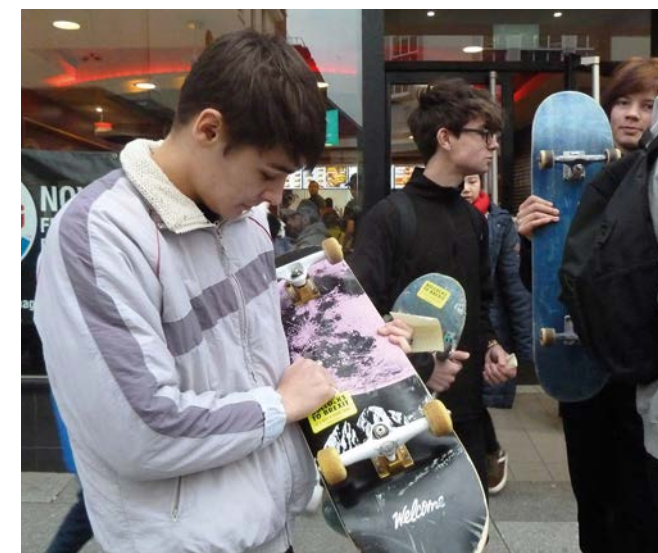
“Because our country is part of a team”

13 January 2018: Exeter

207! That’s the number of new supporters who joined Devon for Europe in just three hours of campaigning on Exeter’s High Street today! This is a record for our street stalls and people were queuing up to speak to us. Strong anecdotal evidence that public opinion is indeed on the turn and the swing to Remain is accelerating.

We were helped by a busy shopping crowd, the fact that the rain held off and, most of all, by our large number of volunteers, including several new faces alongside the usual suspects. Thanks to all who gave so generously of their time: we made a fantastic team!

Young as well as old are now enthusiastically embracing the cause. Among the many wonderful conversations I enjoyed was with Peter Hughes, retired small business owner, who said “For all the opportunities, travel and peace I’ve enjoyed in my life, and because I want the same for my grandchildren, I fervently wish us to remain.” I wish others of the older generation could hear and share in his gratitude. Two young lads gleefully attached a “Bollocks to Brexit” sticker to their skateboards. Best of all, though, was 8-year-old Alice Andrews who, asked why being in the EU was important, replied “Because our country is part of a team!” Simple really! And if an 8-year-old gets it, why can’t our politicians?



Now a Holy War Brexit is the religion The Leavers' Crusade



3 February 2018: Brixham

Today we took the fight to the enemy, holding our first street stall in a town that strongly voted Leave – Brixham. This attractive port has a declining fisheries sector, whose problems, in part associated with EU membership, badly need addressing and should be a major focus of the EU reform process. We went in a spirit of listening rather than thinking we knew the answers.

Brixham wasn't busy on this cold and windy day, but we still signed up 44 new joiners. We had several interesting conversations and received no more than the usual low level of abuse from angry Leavers. One old man who shouted at me came back a minute later to apologize and we ended up shaking hands and wishing each other well. Among the joiners was a young woman and her daughters, who

were very glad to see us. One older woman joined us because, as she explained, she wanted to “defy the stereotype” that old people all voted Leave. However, there were plenty of “hard” Leavers who refused to engage or, when asked what would change their minds, replied “Nothing”. I have the impression that, for these people, Brexit is like a religion: their “faith” is unshakeable despite the mounting evidence that they called it wrong. This is worrying!

My thanks to our hardy volunteers for braving the cold, taking the risk that Brixham represented and keeping calm and cheerful throughout. Fish and chips afterwards on Brixham's quayside was a special treat, as well as a reminder that cod is back on the menu thanks to EU stewardship.

“I believe in the brotherhood of European nations”

10 February 2018: Barnstaple

The grass roots campaign to keep Britain in the EU is the most determined, persistent, committed thing of its kind I’ve ever come across. That’s why it’s going to succeed.

I saw that clearly today, when I went with three other seasoned campaigners from South Devon to join a newly formed local group in Barnstaple, where Devon for Europe held its first street stall in the north of the county.

Nine of us ran the stall for nearly three hours in the pouring rain! Our hopes weren’t high as we set up, and in fact we started slowly. Yet, even as the rain intensified, the interest shown by passers by kept growing. Despite the appalling conditions, we signed up over 80 new joiners. People didn’t seem to mind getting wet as they picked up our leaflet, chose a badge and filled out our joining form.

Our most illustrious joiner was Barnstaple’s town-crier, Tom Evans. Asked why he thought remaining in the EU matters, Tom replied:

“I believe in the brotherhood of European nations.”

Which says it all, really. And if the nine of us who ended up cold, wet and tired yet exhilarated by our teamwork were asked why we do it, we’d surely reply in similar vein: because we believe in the European dream of peace and prosperity; because we are Europeans as well as Brits; because we enjoy the freedoms we have under European law. And because we won’t let the Leavers take our ideals, identities and rights away from us.

Give up, Leavers! Brexit isn’t going to happen! We’re going to stop it!





17 February 2018: Totnes

A sunny day in Totnes saw one of our happiest street stalls yet – and one of our most successful too: 154 sign-ups in just three hours.

Our day began with a striking example of the harm Brexit is already doing. Felix Werner and his wife, who live in Brixham, told us that their earnings from letting a spare room to visiting language students had fallen by £3000 over the past year due to the fall-off in

demand since the referendum. They have no other sources of income, apart from the state pension, and have had to give up holidays, including a much longed for visit to their daughter living in Canada.

The Werners' story is just one example of countless "little people" whose lives have been blighted by Brexit. And we haven't even left yet! Shame on you, Leavers!

My thanks to a superb cast of 13 helpers. The size and staying power of the team definitely affect the numbers joining and it was wonderful to see so many of you. See you again on the next one!





17 March 2018: Ashburton

It's difficult inspiring people to join a cause when your nose is running and your fingers are too cold to write their name on the sign-up card! Nevertheless, Devon for Europe's brave team of volunteers gained some 45 new joiners on a street stall in Ashburton today. My thanks to all seven of them for heroic feats of endurance!

The town was very quiet and, at 12.30 pm, with the biting cold getting

through to all of us and the snow setting in, endangering journeys home, we decided to stop. We handed out leaflets to many who didn't join on the spot but said they'd look at the website – and of course we plugged next Saturday's rally as our most important event yet.

In the teashop afterwards, talk turned to poetry and my favourite poem for our times, Arthur Hugh Clough's Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth.

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves vainly breaking
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

Arthur Hugh Clough, 1819–61

The Brexiteers' stall
At the pro-Europe rally
Played Swedish Abba

The Guardian, 22 March 2018

**Post-Brexit passports
set to be made by
Franco-Dutch firm**

Related Video: Home Office showcase return of blue passport

'It's not even blue': Bemusement over new British passports being 'black'

If it's really blue, says one expert, 'it must be the most apologetic shade of blue they could find'



Red passports made here
Blue passports made somewhere else
Brexit in action



31 March 2018: Newton Abbot

Newton Abbot today was an uphill struggle. I'm amazed at how many remain indifferent to the fate of their country – the "I'm not bothered, mate" response. There were also many dour-faced older people who waved us away with a growl that they had voted Leave and, as usual, a few abusive characters. One very strange woman told me the EU was responsible for immigrant rapes of babies in UK swimming pools! The drizzle obstinately persisted, keeping us "well chilled".

Despite these adverse conditions our spirits remained high and we collected an extraordinary 101 sign-up cards! A few young families, whose children eagerly chose brooches, were especially welcome. So too was a young Spaniard, here since only a week, with whom we communicated in a mix of dog Spanish, Italian and English! I'd also like to thank the charming young man who came up to us at the start and held the flag for us while we set up.

We had 11 volunteers who spent varying amounts of time on the stall, with a few remaining from start to finish at 2.00 pm. We were a fab team and I hope to see you again on another stall soon.

As politicians Betray us through their weakness, Thanks Gina, with love



“I’m not on my own any more”

“I voted Leave. I don’t know anything about it. If it all goes belly up I shall just have to go and live abroad”

7 April 2018: Ivybridge

“Ah! I’m not on my own any more,” said one woman, rounding the corner to come across us as we sheltered from the drizzle in Ivybridge’s Glanville shopping centre. Over a year-and-a-half on from the referendum we are still picking up Remainers who are overjoyed to find us, having felt lonely and depressed since that fateful day. One of our volunteers gave her a huge hug and both she and her daughter joined us.

The town was relatively quiet and the drizzle persisted, but we picked up 46 new supporters. My thanks to our stalwart band of four volunteers.

One big new “sectoral gripe” came to light. We met a man who ran his own business supplying chemicals to garages and other clients, who told us the amount of bureaucracy coming from Brussels was “ridiculous”. To operate, he needs a certificate of professional competence, an ADR licence (for handling hazardous chemicals) and an operator’s license, as well as his HGV license. All renewable every five years, at a cost of £3-4k that he sees as, effectively, “tax”.

Our prize for the most insane quote of the day goes to a woman who said: “I voted Leave. I don’t know anything about it. Ah well, if it all goes belly up I shall just have to go and live abroad”. That had us well and truly silenced!



“I feel anxious about our children’s future”

“Leaving is too risky in an uncertain world”

“People in the UK don’t understand referendums”

14 April 2018: Exmouth

Lots of lovely volunteers in Exmouth today, despite the grey and the cold. Several great local people came along and “stood with us”. Our thanks to the strong contingent from the town, as well as those who came over from other parts of Devon.

We gained 55 would-be new joiners, effectively 49 as 6 had no email. Nearly all took away the generic DfE leaflet, the June march leaflet and the People’s Vote leaflet. We had mixed reactions to the People’s Vote leaflet, some saying “Oh no, not again” and others welcoming the idea. A local couple with two children said: “The public should have a final say because we didn’t have enough information about the consequences of leaving. I feel anxious about our children’s future, culturally as well as economically. They should still have the right to live and work in 28 European countries.”

One woman cast interesting new light on the referendum: “People in the UK don’t understand referendums. I was born in Switzerland, where we have them all the time. It’s the people who should demand a referendum. But here it was the government that imposed one on the people. It’s causing a lot of problems!”

Perhaps the best quote of the day came from a woman who said that leaving “is too risky in a very uncertain world” – a topical comment if ever there was one.



“I love the freedom to travel”

“Brexit has given British people permission to hate”

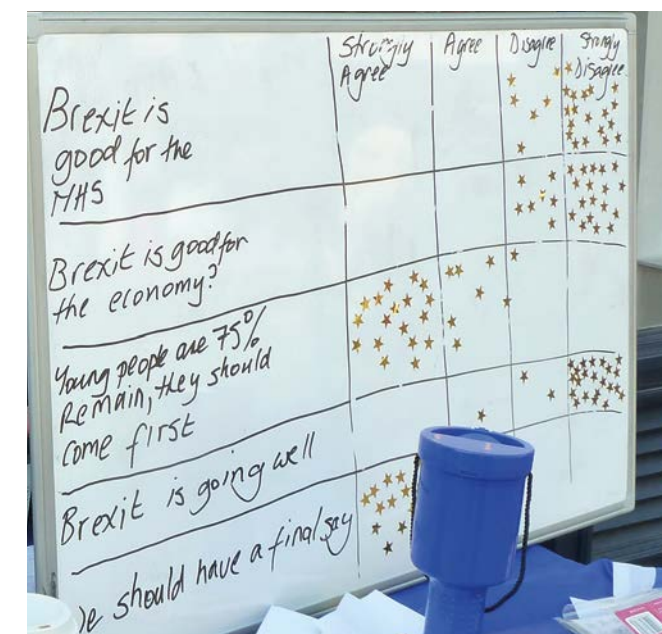
21 April 2018: Torquay

“I’m heartbroken,” says Sally Blake. “Europe is part of our lives. I’ve worked for a German company and I’ve lived in France and Hungary. We have a lot of European friends. Brexit has given British people permission to hate.” Rachel, Sally’s daughter, adds: “I think we should stay in Europe. I love the freedom to travel.”

Sally and Rachel were two of many visitors to our first street stall in Torquay, a town that voted firmly to leave the EU. They were delighted to find us, as were all of the 47 people who joined us. A big draw was the Brexitometer, which allows a more interactive, less confrontational exploration of Brexit and its impact. Several of us had feisty interactions with Leavers, a few of them abusive, especially on the subject of immigration. One person I spoke with came across as proud to be a racist.

We had a superb team of 11 volunteers. My thanks to all, especially those who stayed the course for the full three hours.

Rachel is looking forward to turning 18, a few years from now. She told me in no uncertain terms that she will vote for whoever will bring us back into the EU. Bless you, Rachel – you restore my faith in human nature.



So, 'At any cost' You will destroy our country While screaming "We won!"



28 April 2018: Paignton

If ever there were a town that exemplifies the mass delusion that is Brexit it must be Paignton. The predominantly elderly residents on its streets today came across as having voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU, in the fond belief that this will make their difficult, downtrodden lives better. Brexit is a classic example of scapegoating!

That said, we experienced comparatively little abuse. In its place a strange silence has fallen, morose yes, but also troubled, suggesting a new unease, a new questioning. As one of our volunteers noted, a growing number of Leavers are unhappy with the way negotiations are progressing, believing either that Brexit won't happen at all or, if it does, that it won't deliver the benefits they were led to expect from it. Such people are receptive to the idea of a People's Vote on the final deal.

Our Brexitometer results confirm this impression. Most of those who engaged with it were Remainers, but the few Leavers who completed it for the most part showed that they too now had negative, or at best ambivalent, expectations from Brexit. The pic shows a surprising degree of consensus, including strong support for a final say.



We managed 33 sign-ups, 8 of them without email. My thanks to our valiant team of six volunteers.

2 May 2018, nbcnews.com

Cambridge Analytica to close down after Facebook data scandal



5 May 2018: Exeter

Today was a giant stall in Exeter, where a group of us worked from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm and signed up over 340 people. It was amazing. Here are a couple of pics that capture the excitement of the day. We're winning!!





**Mercer and Facebook
Shame! You use technology
To trick the people**

"I'm a Remainer now"

12 May 2018: Plymouth

"The mess! That's what made me change my mind." These are the words of Sarah Boisson, a student of engineering at City College, Plymouth.

"I voted Leave in the 2016 referendum, but I'm a Remainer now," she says, jubilantly brandishing the Devon for Europe leaflets she plans to share with her friends. Sarah's conversion to the Remain cause came while she was standing at our street stall, but it followed weeks of reflection as she slowly realized how badly Brexit was going. "I feel I was very poorly informed during the referendum campaign," she adds. "That's why I now support a

People's Vote, once we know what the final deal looks like."

This was a joyful moment for all of us on the stall – the best of an exciting day on which it felt that Plymouth was finally "on the turn". Over 200 people joined us, a sharp increase in numbers over previous stalls in the city. Many were young people or families who shared Sarah's reaction: what a mess! But there is a way out – and growing numbers want us to take it. Roll on the march for a People's Vote, in London on June 23. Sarah will be there; please make sure you will be too.



"I feel I was very poorly informed during the referendum campaign. That's why I now support a People's Vote"



19 May 2018: Teignmouth

Sunny Teignmouth was a delight today, yielding 68 new joiners in three hours of intensive campaigning by the 11 dedicated volunteers who came to spread our ever more confident message: we can stop Brexit – and the way to do that is through a People’s Vote, which we will march for on June 23. The Brexitometer told the same story as we are hearing across Devon: people no longer have any confidence in the promises made by the Leave campaign. They think it will be bad for the NHS and bad for jobs; they want young people’s views and needs to come first; they think the negotiations are a shambles; and they want an exit from Brexit, regarding the People’s Vote as their best chance of securing that.

The “double table” approach once again showed its paces. It establishes a weightier, more professional presence than the single table stall, which comes across as “fly-by-night” by comparison (as if we were doing the three-card trick and might need to collapse the table and scarper if the police appeared!)



My thanks to our committed team of 10 volunteers, especially our tireless flag-waver!

For Maggie Thatcher The Falklands War rescued her Russia could save May



26 May 2018: Totnes

A stall in Totnes is always fun and today did not disappoint. Interest was keen and we were swamped within seconds of starting to set up. We enjoyed many conversations with young and old alike. Two lovely women chose Love and Peace badges, in true Totnesian style. Even the Leavers we spoke to were gentle and engaging. The Brexitometer told its by now familiar story: the lack of faith in Brexit just grows and grows.

The Plains proved a viable alternative to our usual spot opposite the market. The only down side was a tree that made us all cough and wheeze – hardly a good ornamental!

Our wonderful team of nine volunteers signed up 72 joiners and flawlessly introduced the new sign-up card, a big achievement given the strict new rules since GDPR came into force just yesterday. Congratulations and thanks to all!



“Since the 2016 referendum I’ve been worried that I made the wrong decision”

2 June 2018: Exeter

I want to start my report on today’s all-day street stall in Exeter by thanking our wonderful team of volunteers, who toiled long and hard under the sun. It is your hard work and dedication that is enabling Devon for Europe, and hence Britain for Europe, to become a mass movement, built from the ground up. A special thank you to our principal “anchor” person behind the table, who was there from start to finish and helped with both the set-up and the strike.

We achieved an impressive 137 sign-ups, several from people who had voted Leave. One of them was Avril Judge, who told me the story of her own “conversion” to Remain as she sat with her grandchildren on a seat beside our stall. “I felt the amount of money being poured into Europe came at the expense of our own health and social care,” she said. “But since the June 2016 referendum

I’ve been worried that I made the wrong decision. The information I had at the time seemed to reflect what I believed in, but soon afterwards I realized I hadn’t been properly informed. They kept changing their story.”

Avril’s words echo those of many Leavers as they wake up to the lies told by the Leave campaign, especially the lie on the big red bus! As she signed up to join us, others on our team offered her our thanks and congratulations on her change of heart. Moments like this make our efforts worthwhile.

It is especially encouraging to see new volunteers, who may have felt hesitant at first, quickly take up the challenge of engaging with the public and start to relax and enjoy themselves as they do. Once again, my thanks to all.

“My son wanted to apply for the EU Youth Orchestra.
He will no longer be eligible after Brexit”

9 June 2018: Totnes

In Totnes today we met James Royce, who told us this sad story.

“My son Max is a young musician, a cellist. He plays with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and wanted to apply for the EU Youth Orchestra. This was based in London, but because of Brexit has moved to Italy. My son will no longer be eligible to apply after Brexit.”

This is just one example of how the lives of our young have been blighted by Brexit. Shame on you, Leavers! How can you justify such selfishness?

James was one of the 86 new supporters we signed up on a day when many in Devon’s kindest town greeted us with smiles, thumbs up and thanks for what we are doing. Abuse was at an all-time low, though there were a few surly glances and grunts. Remainers are the nicest people!

Interest in the London march was high and I believe we’ll have sold most of the 10 remaining places on the coach going from Totnes.

My thanks to our 11 valiant volunteers. Exeter next week, then the big march, 23 June. Be there!





10 June 2018: Bovey Tracey

Our stall in Bovey Tracey today enjoyed a pastoral setting, in tranquil Millmarsh Park on the banks of the River Bovey. We set up our table on the grass and draped our EU flag over the branch of a tree! It made a refreshing change from the glare, fumes and din of the streets.

Why were we there? The park was host to the Contemporary Craft Festival, a popular annual event that we had chosen for the South Devon team's first experiment with a 'pop-up' stall. These are simple affairs that revert to the use of a single table, a reduced set of "props", a shorter duration and a lower number of volunteers than the more complex, larger, all-day stalls we've taken to recently.

If well targeted, the pop-up stall can be a great success. And this one certainly was. With only five volunteers, we gained no fewer than 108 sign-ups in just over three hours of campaigning. As soon as we were set up, people entering the fair queued up to talk with us, thank us for what we are doing, look at our leaflets and sign up to join. Several expressed strong interest in the London march and we think we managed to sell several of the last remaining coach tickets.

As ever, the Brexitometer proved a great draw. Opinions in Bovey echoed those we've seen across the county, with overwhelming support for a People's Vote on the final deal Mrs May and her ministers bring back from Brussels.

Thank you to our four hard-working volunteers for giving up the best part of a Sunday.

18 June 2018, The Guardian

New Lords defeat for government on Brexit 'meaningful vote' amendment

We've now had enough
Of 'Party before Country'
Thank you House of Lords!



Three hundred thousand!
March of our lives, for our lives
Our children's future

23 June 2018

A wonderful day in London, on the big march with friends, family and the incredible Devon for Europe team. People came in their thousands from up and down the land, five coach loads from Devon alone. Young and old;

black, white and brown; from all walks of life – a heart-warming diversity that showed our country at its best. Here are some pics that, I hope, capture the energy and excitement of the day.



9 July 2018, The Guardian

May's plan 'sticks in the throat', says Boris Johnson as he resigns over Brexit

Boris resigns as
Trump puts the knife into May
Coincidence? No!

17 July 2018, bbc.co.uk

Vote Leave broke electoral law, says Electoral Commission

Jeremy Corbyn,
The referendum was flawed
As you damn well know



19 July 2018, bbc.co.uk

Salisbury poisoning: Police ‘identify Novichok suspects’

How could someone think
Voting Leave would keep you safe?
From Russia, with love



21 July 2018: Exeter

Exeter today was a busy stall with plenty of excitement.

We met some aggressive Leavers. “Shouty Redneck” (as I call him) strode by, a raw and fatty piece of gammon, heavily tattooed, who yells abuse at us but doesn’t engage (he visited us on a previous occasion, when he immediately provoked two more sign-ups). The open expression of fascist views has now been normalized and I was particularly disgusted by one man who told me that “Hitler did a good job”.

On the up side, we had plenty of interest, with people queuing up to talk with us, sign up, take badges and use the Brexitometer. Many expressed their dismay at the chaos

and incompetence of our government. Our final Brexitometer told its by now familiar story of utter lack of faith in the entire Brexit project. Best of all, Ben Bradshaw stopped by and got off his bike to give us some morale-boosting encouragement. I asked him how close we are to getting a People’s Vote and he said “Getting closer every day”.

We achieved 97 sign-ups in three hours. As ever, my thanks to our eight volunteers, especially to those who came at the start and stayed the course until the end.

Next week we return to Brixham, where we’ll aim to achieve a really stunning Brexitometer to send to Sarah Wollaston.



28 July 2018: Brixham

Today's stall in Brixham was a lively affair with plenty of interest from passers-by. In just three hours we gained 60 sign-ups – an excellent result for this Leave-voting fisheries town. We met several people who voted Leave in the 2016 referendum and have since changed their mind. They all said the same thing: "We were misinformed!"

Our final Brexitometer speaks volumes: even in Brixham people are turning against Brexit in droves. There is now overwhelming support for a People's Vote and I feel we must now be near the break-through point for this. Very exciting!

My impression is that the current impasse in the negotiations is bringing people to their senses: they are starting to understand that Brexit has nowhere to go but the rubbish bin of history. Of course we met plenty of hard-core Leavers and had some feisty conversations. But abuse was

no worse than we have seen elsewhere and no one threatened us.

We distributed copies of a draft paper on the fishing industry that may – or may not – help to dispel some of the illusions people have about this sector. This is available on request and we would welcome comments.

Our team of volunteers were superb – supporting each other well and remaining, for the most part, measured and cheerful under fire! There's definitely strength in numbers and it was great that so many turned out for this challenging pitch.



29 July 2018, The Independent

“Theresa May’s Chequers deal is already dead. Here’s my plan for a Final Say referendum”

– Justine Greening



Photo: Peter Sturdgess

29 July 2018, The Observer

Anger over use of Brexit ads in aftermath of Jo Cox murder

1 August: Totnes

An exciting evening meeting at the Seven Sisters Hotel, Totnes, where local MP Sarah Wollaston met DfE supporters and announced her change of heart on Brexit and her support for a People’s Vote. This is a real turning point! Sarah several times mentioned the strength of Devon for Europe’s campaigning and the power of the Brexitometer as a persuasive tool.





“You’re undermining democracy”

4 August 2018: Dawlish

In the warm summer sunshine, Dawlish today appeared delightfully laid back, the picture of English seaside charm. But beneath the surface, tensions bubbled.

We found opinion polarized as never before. At times our stall was almost besieged, as people queued up to find out about us, join us, sign the petition for a People’s Vote, choose a badge or have a go on the Brexitometer. We achieved 69 new joiners in just three hours of campaigning. Leavers, in contrast, were rude and dismissive, aggressively wagging their fingers at us.

Their theme was that we were undermining democracy, defying the will of the people. It was a foretaste of what is to come. Make no mistake, when it all unravels the Brexiters

will blame anyone but themselves – and we Remainers will be in the front line.

This was one of the best attended stalls we have held recently. There is strength in numbers and I felt sure that our 15 volunteers had a deterrent effect on potential trouble makers. My thanks to all who braved the heat, physical as well as metaphorical.



An uphill battle Fighting lies, threats and the press. We will not give up!



“I want our flag included among the European flags”

10 August 2018: Kingsbridge

“I want our our flag to be included among the European flags, not left out. England has always been in Europe, not in the middle of nowhere.” These are the words of 11-year-old Rufus, who visited our stall in Kingsbridge today while on holiday with his parents. Rufus thinks it’s great that other nationalities should socialize with us – great for us and great for them. “There’s billions of people in Europe who could be our friends,” he says.



If an 11-year-old “gets” the EU, why can’t our politicians? Surely it can only be a matter of time: a poll published yesterday shows that the Southwest is in the vanguard of the swing to Remain taking place across the country, with young people particularly keen to prevent the isolation that Brexit threatens. The pressure for a People’s Vote continues to rise: surely it’s now unstoppable.

Kingsbridge was relatively quiet on this showery, breezy Friday. But we all had some interesting

conversations. Remainers were, as ever, delighted to find us. Leavers were their usual bad-tempered and occasionally aggressive selves: a couple of middle-aged men said they wanted to beat me up. We met no one who had changed their minds: the wave of converts to Remain that we have seen over the past months seems to have petered out and we are left with the hard-core Leavers – stubborn and blind to all reason.

This stall turned turned into a family occasion for me. My daughter joined us with my brother and his two children, visiting from their home in Burgundy. My brother, who has worked in the Netherlands and Italy as well as living for over a decade in France, is one of the “marooned” Britons in Europe who stand to lose their freedom of movement if Brexit goes ahead. Like Rufus, his two children grasp the importance of the EU with a natural immediacy that should put our politicians to shame. They had great fun expressing their views on the Brexitometer.

The rain spat on us sporadically throughout the morning. Then, at 1.15 pm, the taps were turned on and we were deluged, so we decided to pack up 10 minutes early. Never mind – we still gained 35 new joiners, thanks to the efforts of our seven volunteers.

“We’ve been given money to support local businesses and communities”



18 August 2018: Modbury

“Have you got room for a book?” Asked why staying in the EU is important for Britain, Dr Celia Brakes isn’t short of reasons.

“It matters most because of climate change, terrorism and other challenges that transcend the nation state,” she says. Formerly Head of Ancient History at Edinburgh University, Brakes points out that nation states are a relatively recent phenomenon and may not be around for much longer. “As historians, we see how empires come and go.”

Nearer to home than the broad sweep of history, there’s a more pressing personal reason why Brakes is keen to stop Brexit. “My son Anthony wants to study international relations and Japanese at Leiden University in the Netherlands and because he was born three years too late he has lost that opportunity. He wants to study international relations in an international environment, not in a country that is turning its back on its friends and neighbours.”

This is just one example of how the decision to leave, taken predominantly by the old, is blighting the lives of the young. As one older man we met put it, “The big mistake was allowing people over 65 to vote – aside from you and me.”

The future of our young people is also a concern for Belinda Gantry, a campaigner on environmental issues and fund raiser for local initiatives in the South Hams. Gantry’s chief worry is that EU funding, which supports job creation, is drying up. It is well known that Leave-voting Cornwall gets the lion’s share of EU funding for the South West, less well known that Devon also benefits. The main recipient is the South Hams Local Action Group and the funds are administered through Devon Renaissance, based in Ashburton. Their activities deserve to be better known and appreciated by local people, according to Gantry. “We’ve been given tranches of money to support local businesses and communities,” she says. “The group and its partners have created numerous jobs and helped businesses start and grow. Now there’s no more money; the EU have pulled the plug. The whole thing is an absolute disaster.”

Brakes and Gantry are two of the 42 people who signed up to join us at our street stall in Modbury today. This attractive and prosperous small town was generally welcoming, though there was some low-level abuse. My thanks to our excellent team of volunteers, one of whom came over from Somerset to support us.



Nineteen eighty-four Big Brother we discover Is Facebook. How's that!



24 August 2018: Salcombe

“Love!” said the little girl decisively. “I want the badge that says ‘Love’”.

We’d tried to palm her off with “For the climate” or “Animal welfare”, but she wasn’t having any of it. So, with full parental approval, we gave her what she asked for and took it as a sign that, if we do leave the EU in March 2019, the next generation will bring us back in again – and for all the right reasons.

Seductive Salcombe proved a tricky place to operate. Its cramped and crowded streets, with a craftswoman perched on every corner, meant we had to move three times before finding an acceptable spot. Parking was scarce and short term, so we spent too much time moving our cars and feeding meters.

Despite these difficulties, our time in Salcombe was well spent. With only three of us on the stall we managed to sign up 64 people, many of them holiday makers. I’m grateful to the two others, especially for staying on an extra half hour to make up for our late start.

Plenty of well heeled people passed us by. We had the impression they don’t care about Brexit because they think they won’t be greatly affected by it. How to wake them up and enlist their support?

Perhaps love is the answer. It’s supposed to conquer all things, after all. Even indifference?



25 August 2018: Newton Abbot

Our street stall today was in Newton Abbot, where opinion on Brexit seems more sharply divided than ever.

There was keen interest in Devon for Europe and great appreciation of what we are doing. People queued up to join us and we gained 95 new sign-ups in just three hours. The Brexitometer confirmed what we have seen elsewhere – a great surge of public disgust at what is being done to our country.

But we also met many angry Leavers. Indeed, at times the place seemed like a hornets' nest: one poke with a twig had them swarming round us, jabbing with their fingers, shouting us down. Many seemed desperately in denial, maintaining against all the evidence that all would be well and anyone who said otherwise was indulging in Project Fear.

Today we signed up our first homeless person. Jeremy has been living on the streets for two weeks, having recently broken up with his fiancée. He works occasionally as a stage-hand but it does not pay him well enough to rent a flat of his own. He told me he had voted Remain but most of his mates had voted Leave and were now regretting it. He said he would spread the word about us.

This was one of our best supported stalls ever. Thank you to our superb team of 15 volunteers, many of whom stayed from start to finish.



Xenophobia And racism now win votes This is Great Britain?



“Our prisons are full of EU immigrants
and we can’t repatriate them”

8 September 2018: Dartmouth

On our street stall in Dartmouth today we gained a record 82 signatures for the People’s Vote petition. People signed it in droves – and the Brexitometer confirmed the strong support for this. Public opinion really is shifting.

In a little over three hours we picked up 61 new supporters. On the way home I stopped at Ben’s Farm Shop (near Totnes), where I recruited a further 6 (4 of them staff!), making a haul for the day of 67. Overall, I note far less need now than a few months ago to explain our aims and the point of a People’s Vote: people have heard of us, and it; they “get” it; and they sign up immediately, with little further questioning, beyond “What are our chances?” To which I respond, “High – and rising!” Several of us had long conversations with people who had voted Leave and seemed open to reflection on the wisdom of their decision. One woman, who worked for an international company, made one of the few plausible cases for Brexit I’ve yet heard: she argued that the shock will lead to a long-term rebalancing of our economy so that we start to make more things ourselves and to invest more in our own labour force. This rationale might be technically correct but it seems rather cold-blooded: what about the short-term suffering, I countered; how can you

justify the loss of jobs and livelihoods today? This gave her pause for thought – and she went away with our leaflets. Many others also took away our materials and I had the impression that a sizeable number of “soft” Leavers are now having second thoughts, even if they are not yet ready to join us. Sadly, we took a lot of abuse. Much of this related to immigration – people talking about criminals and rapists, how our prisons are “full of EU immigrants”, and how “we can’t repatriate them”. One of us suffered five such awful encounters on the trot. There was also a great deal of ignorance: I was surprised at the number of people who didn’t know that the 2016 referendum had broken the spending rules and ought, according to the Venice Convention on these matters, to be declared nul and void. We can blame this on the dereliction of duty of our mainstream media, particularly the BBC.

Amidst all this a troupe of passing Morris dancers lightened the mood. Many seemed pro-Remain and signed up to join us.

Many thanks to our volunteers, who persisted despite intermittent rain. Next week we’re in Totnes – usually a kinder gig. See you there – and don’t forget to shop at Ben’s on the way!



We're the Resistance
We know that Brexit is wrong
We fight for what's right

"Brexit is a travesty of social justice,
a complete undermining of our democracy"

15 September 2018: Totnes

"Brexit is a travesty of social justice, a complete undermining of our democracy. It's the pits!"
Thus town councillor Ray Hendriksen, who visited our street stall in Totnes today.

It was a delight for us to return to Devon's kindest town, which has declared itself an independent city state and issued its own passport in revolt against what is being done to our country. Our stall was one of the busiest ever, with 93 people joining us and a stunning 145 signing the petition for a People's Vote. Many thanked us for what we are doing and abuse was at an all-time low – just a few muted growls.

Two NHS workers expressed their concern about the effect of Brexit on staffing levels. One, a doctor at Plymouth's Derriford Hospital, said the hospital was already in crisis and things could only get worse if Brexit were to go ahead.

As ever, the town seemed to be attracting numerous EU visitors. A large and garrulous party of Belgians came through and applauded our efforts.

One woman told me she and her family had moved to Totnes from a nearby rural area in order to get away from Leavers in the deep countryside. Bless you, Totnes – you are our salvation, as well as our pride and joy!

Our volunteers relaxed and enjoyed themselves, bathing in the warmth after a spate of "heavy" stalls in other towns over the past few weeks. My thanks to them all!





"I think Brexit's gone beyond being polite.
I'm so angry about it"

20 September 2018: Moretonhampstead

"We have a polite version of that if you'd prefer it," I said to Emily Beech, who'd just been handed a Bollocks to Brexit sticker by one of our volunteers.

"I don't," came the answer. "I think Brexit's gone beyond being polite. I'm so angry about it. I'm angry myself, and I'm angry on behalf of my children. I can't see the benefits of leaving. There is so much we're going to lose."

Emily is one of the 32 people who signed up to join us at our street stall in Moretonhampstead today. Many shared her anger at what is being done to our country by the liars, cheats, thieves and chancers who currently govern it. Even in this traditional Dartmoor town, with its strong links to a farming community renowned for its conservatism, public opinion is on the move. Surely this disastrous project is now on its last legs!

This was the first street stall since April for which I've worn my wellies! It was wet and increasingly blustery, but we stood the course. The town was quiet, so besides running the stall we were able to get some leafleting done. My thanks to our valiant crew, also fired up by anger.

The wonderful thing about the anger of Remainers is that it doesn't fade over time. It just gets stronger and stronger. And more and more articulate, as we learn to debunk the lies and myths peddled by the Leavers. And more and more determined. Together, we will win this!





26 September 2018: Exeter

It was a joy to hold a stall in Remain-voting Exeter in brilliant sunshine today. We were well supported by our largest ever team of volunteers and achieved an impressive 206 sign-ups. The stall was one of the busiest we've seen and people queued up to talk to us.

A number of us had good conversations with Leavers who were reflective about their vote and able to articulate their reasons for it. One of them acknowledged a major weakness of the Leave position, namely that, if the UK leaves the EU, it places itself in the vanguard of the fascist resurgence across Europe – not a good place to be and history will surely condemn us for it. Despite our agreeing on this, he was unwilling to change his mind and join us on the spot, but he did take away our leaflets and said he would think about it.

As usual in Exeter, we met large numbers of EU citizens from other countries. One I met, a Romanian care worker, expressed her grief and dismay at the 2016 vote with such dignity that I found myself thinking, how can we bear

to risk losing these fine, hard-working people who contribute so much to our economy and society? If the anti-immigrant brigade we so often come across could only get a taste of how great most migrants are, surely they would repent and change their minds about Brexit.

For the first time, we ran two Brexitometers – one the “standard model” we've used throughout South Devon over the past six months and the other with a special question for students, to which we directed anyone fresh-faced or connected with academia. Both got fully used and having two helped reduce queuing time. They send similar and very strong messages about what the public now think of Brexit. It cannot be long before we get a People's vote – our only route out of this mess!

Our 22-strong team of volunteers excelled themselves. Special thanks to those who came long distances and/or stayed the course from start to finish. With people like us around, resurgent fascism doesn't stand a chance!





“Why are leaving the world’s most successful peace project?”

27 September 2018: Ivybridge

Our stall in Ivybridge formed a marked contrast with Exeter the day before. The town was quiet: most people of working age were... well, working, so the majority of those who passed our stall in the Glanville Mills shopping precinct were retired. Many disliked what we were doing – but a few did not and the 7 we signed up appreciated our efforts. Quite a few more were unwilling to join on the spot but took away our leaflets.

One older woman proudly chose a “Peace” badge and allowed me to pin it next to the poppy she also wore. I did not ask her for her story, but we are coming up once again to that time of year when it is appropriate to remember the origins of the EU in the ashes of the Second World War. Why, oh why, are we leaving the world’s most successful peace project?

Ivybridge gets the prize for the maddest thing ever said to me on a street stall. A solitary woman seated at a nearby café table summoned me over and ordered me to sit down. I did so. She leaned forward in

a conspiratorial manner and said: “Jeremy Corbyn is a Muslim!”

I stood up and said: “I am sorry, but that is rubbish and I cannot afford the time to sit and listen to it.” As I walked away I turned and said loudly: “So what if he were a Muslim? Islam is beautiful! Al-hamdulillah!”

There is a lot of this kind of thing about and it is growing worse. Is there something in the water? With the Romans, it was lead...

My thanks to our five sterling volunteers. We broke off early to go to a demo at South Hams District Council.



‘Them and us’. ‘Other’.

Divide and rule, Brexit’s plan.

Not ours. Not Europe’s

3 October 2018: Teignmouth

“My children’s future.” That was Sue Raymond’s simple but eloquent reply when I asked her why she had changed her mind about leaving the EU and now wanted a People’s Vote so that she could play her part in setting matters right.

Would that all the Leavers we came across today could be as honest and unselfish in confronting the need to re-think their vote of two years ago. Our stall in Teignmouth gained 46 new sign-ups to Devon for Europe and over 80 signatures for the People’s Vote petition, but it also drew plenty of abuse from the town’s mainly elderly Leavers, who seemed as obdurate and immune to reason as ever. Many expressed views that were unashamedly racist; several were extremely rude; and I was struck by their selfish denial of young people’s interests. Theirs is a grim second childhood, sans empathy.

There were, however, glimmers of hope. One of our volunteers spoke with two “ardent” Leavers who were reconsidering. One said it was obvious that our NHS would suffer. His boss, the owner of a small business, was “really struggling” and “very worried”.

Our volunteers were their usual cheerful selves. I love the way we comfort each other when we’ve been on the receiving end of abuse. The star turn was the volunteer from Dawlish who rode over on his EU-themed Vespa, complete with flag. “I get appreciative toots from some motorists,” he says, “but others are less complementary.”

Sue’s daughter Rosemary, who had accompanied her into town, said “Thank you, Mum,” when her mother signed up to join us. And so say all of us.



10 October 2018: Plymouth

Street stalls on weekdays have a different dynamic to Saturday stalls. Many people are in a hurry to get to or from work so can't stop to talk, but a sizeable minority seem to have... how shall I put it, too much time on their hands? More on them in a minute, but let's tell the good news first.

In Plymouth today we signed up 85 new joiners to Devon for Europe and gained 89 signatures on the petition for a People's Vote. Plenty of these said they'd like to come on

the 20 October march, so I believe we sold most of those remaining Plymouth coach tickets. Several were Leavers who had changed their minds. As ever, people were glad to see us and thanked us for what we were doing.

That helped wash away the pain of other encounters. The fact is we were plagued, intermittently throughout the stall, by aggressive time-wasters – people who latched on to one of our volunteers and

harangued them for extended periods, jabbing fingers in chests and shouting abuse in faces. There is no reason left in these people, who often come across as emotionally ill. Sometimes we have the impression they are not really interested in Brexit but merely wish to pick a fight.

It is difficult to know how to deal with these "cases", but there are ways and we must learn them, because this kind of thing can only worsen as Brexit falls apart. One technique is to dilute and distract by having another volunteer step into the exchange. Many of us are using this technique instinctively already, and we can learn from each other how and when to apply it more deliberately. With the more persistent time-wasters, there is sometimes no alternative but to say "Thank you for your point of view, we must now end this discussion as we have other people who want to talk with us." This doesn't always work, but if we say it politely but firmly, as a policeman might, it stands a fair chance of being effective.

Our seven volunteers took all the abuse in their stride and were superb in their support both for each other and for the cause we all pursue. It was especially good to meet two students at Plymouth University who said they'd like to run a stall close to the campus.



Hell hath no fury
Like a doctor turned MP
Whose boss lies to her

12 October 2018: Totnes

Today belonged to our heroic volunteers, who braved wind and rain to get to our stall in Totnes.

Setting up in the deluge didn't appeal, so we started with coffee and cakes at a nearby café. It was a great opportunity to do something we don't have time for when a stall is up and running – get to know each other a little.

By midday the rain had abated, so we ran the stall for an hour and a half, achieving

27 signatures to the Petition for a People's Vote and 17 sign-ups to Devon for Europe.

Abuse in friendly Totnes was at an all-time low. I had just turned to a colleague and said as much when an older man who had overheard me as he was passing by said: "I'm famous for my abuse." I replied: "But you can't be; you're smiling so kindly." "So are you," he said, "so I'll spare you." We laughed and shook hands.



14 October 2018: Exeter

Our day in Exeter started with a delightful social hour, spent breakfasting at Carluccio's while the rain streamed down outside.

At midday the weather let up enough to launch the stall. Things were slow at first, with many passers-by unwilling to stop and talk under a sky that continued to drip. As a watery sun broke through, more people began to engage and our spirits rose: our day was going to be a success after all. In four hours we signed up 97 new joiners, then a further 2 at the Café Rouge afterwards, making 99 in all. An impressive 138 people signed the petition for a People's Vote. The demand for this now regularly outruns the number of new joiners, suggesting massive tacit support for Remain. Many expressed an interest in coaches for the London march, which promises to be huge.

As on previous visits to Exeter, we met plenty of continental EU citizens. Few seemed to know about [the 3 Million²](#), so we encouraged them to join this group as well as signing them up to Devon for Europe.

Our volunteers never cease to amaze me in their determination and persistence. They come out time and again, even on a rainy Sunday. My thanks to the 13 who did so today. Special thanks to the young Lib Dems from Exeter University, who greatly increased our engagement with young people. See you all again soon – London here we come!

² The 3 Million is the online support group for the estimated 3 million continental EU citizens living in the UK at the time of the 2016 referendum.



20 October 2018: London march

On Saturday Christel and I were a small part of history in the making. Two tiny dots in a vast sea of humanity, we joined three quarters of a million others in a march that will shape

our country’s future for decades to come. The atmosphere was carnival-like, a joyous celebration of Britain at its diverse, open-minded, outward-looking best.





"I live in Wales, so Brexit doesn't affect me!"

27 October 2018: Paignton

Today's street stall in Paignton was a breath of fresh air – literally. For a change we tried the sea-front, setting up outside the Geo-Centre, a short way along from the pier. This proved a livelier pitch than our previous one in Victoria Street, but it was still sticky going.

Footfall was low and many we tried to engage with were apathetic or dismissive. Despite our successful London march of a week ago, the town's mainly elderly folk seemed to doubt a People's Vote was achievable. "If you succeed, I'll go for a swim in that sea," said one, clearly believing I'd lose our bet.

Despite the scepticism we enjoyed plenty of friendly conversations and signed up 32 new people. Several promised to write to Paignton's MP, Kevin Foster.

We often meet couples who are divided on Brexit. Many say grimly, "We don't talk about it any more," and walk on, mouths turned down. But sometimes the issue is still under discussion or even a laughing matter. Today we met a father and son whose affection for each other was clearly undiminished by their difference of opinion. The father had voted Leave and the son Remain, but they are still talking and joking about it. The son eagerly joined Devon for Europe and took his turn on the Brexitometer while the father watched pensively. I had the feeling he will change his mind eventually.

Favourite bonkers statement of the day: "I live in Wales, so Brexit doesn't affect me!"





“For evil to triumph, it is sufficient only that good people should do nothing”

1 November 2018: Plymouth University

“Hah!” said the young woman in response to our Brexitometer question, “Will Brexit be good for the NHS?” A medical student, she knew where to put her sticker all right.

Today’s stall in Plymouth was a joint effort with Plymouth University’s [Students for Europe](#) group. It was a joy to interact with the students as they made their way to and from lectures and back and forth from a snack bar across the road. We met young people from all over the world, including Iraq, Ukraine, China, Democratic Republic of Congo and Spain, as well as the UK. Almost all were scathing about Brexit.

In just two hours of campaigning we gained 39 sign-ups to Devon for Europe and 16 new members of the pro-EU students group, who hold their inaugural meeting tomorrow. Most took post-cards and promised to send them to one of Plymouth’s two MPs, Johnny Mercer and Luke Pollard, urging them to support a People’s Vote.

The students were for the most part very switched on politically, but one young man I met said he “wasn’t political” and was disinclined

to get involved. I paraphrased Burke: “For evil to triumph, it is sufficient only that good people should do nothing.” Immediately, he took the pen and card from my hand and signed up to join us.

At one point a large mini-bus style taxi parked on the pavement in front of our stall. One of our volunteers asked the driver if he’d like a Bollocks to Brexit sticker. He replied that it wasn’t his car so this wouldn’t be allowed. Then he said, “I’ll have some for my girls, though. They were in tears the morning of the referendum result.” So he took a load of stickers and a postcard to write to his MP, to show his daughters he was doing his best for them.

All this was very heartening. If we do leave the EU, the young ones will soon bring us back in again – of that we can be sure.

The volunteers enjoyed the experience greatly. Our venture with this fledgling university group was a big success. Special thanks to the students who proposed and supported it. Let’s do it again soon!

What is fascism?

When politicians break laws

With impunity



3 November 2018: Plymouth

Our street stall in Plymouth today was held in Mutley Plain, a no-worse-than-average high street complete with disused bank and other boarded up premises as well as busy cafés and supermarkets. Plenty of students live in this area, so this was part of our drive to reach a younger demographic. We set up on a windy corner, just along from a Wetherspoons pub.

We attracted plenty of interest, achieving 61 sign-ups and dispensing lots of post-cards addressed to local MP Luke Pollard, demanding a People's Vote. Are you receiving us, Luke?

This was a marathon stall, three-and-a-half hours long, so let me thank our committed team of 11 volunteers, many of whom went from start to finish.

The abuse started as banter – light-hearted taunts from groups of young men as they walked past on their way to or from the pub. Then, as alcohol levels rose and the football got under way, it became more serious. Our flag-waver and I faced down a couple of men who were angry not just about our 'lack of respect' for democracy but also about our alleged status as part of the liberal elite. "I'll bet you're from f***ing Totnes," one of them sneered, while the other accused us of being "f***ing academics". We stayed calm and saw them off – and I absolutely commend our flag-

waver for remaining unperturbed by the finger wagged right in his face. I did have one spirited but reasonable conversation with a youth who reproached his companions for swearing at us but was unshakeable in his conviction that "all the research" showed we'd be better off out.

Two things struck me about these young men. First, they were all of one mind: Brexit was a tribal issue and stepping out of line to express a contrary opinion would not have been acceptable. Second, it would be only too easy to marshal them into a 1930s-style people's militia – to equip them with brown or black shirts and invite them to "pick up a rifle", as Nigel Farage has promised he will do if there is any back-sliding on Brexit.

I was standing on the pavement proffering leaflets as the pub spewed out yet another group of them. Suddenly, as one of them passed me, an arm shot out, grabbed my beret and threw it to the ground. "Only joking", he said, "so don't have a go at me."

Fascism is fun, right? A bit of a laugh, really. Until it isn't...



You must be joking! The BBC unbiased? It speaks for Tories

10 November 2018: BBC Plymouth



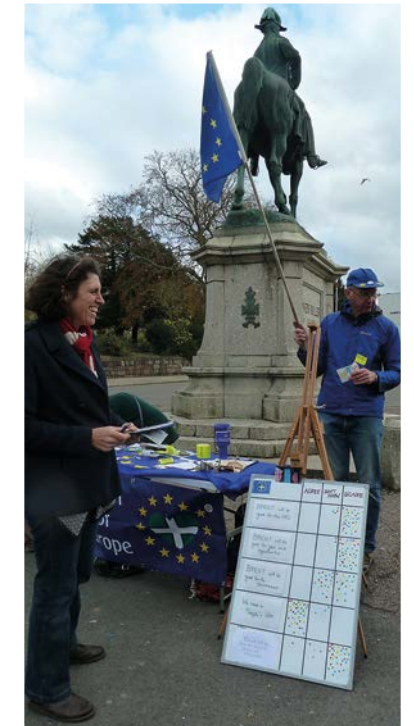
14 November 2018: Exeter College

Today saw us in Exeter again, this time outside Exeter College.

Talking to the students as they went to and from classes and lunch was exhilarating. Many were very switched on politically and at times our stall was swamped by bright-eyed young ones eagerly signing up and asking us about the chances of stopping Brexit. In just two hours we welcomed 152 new joiners. And I believe others will follow online, as our B2B stickers, sported on mobile phones and text books as well as clothing, help spread the word. Time and again we drove home the importance of signing the petition for a People's Vote, a message to which many seemed touchingly receptive. I felt we provided these delightful young people, who often feel betrayed by their elders, with a ray of hope!

Lording it over us as we conducted the stall was Exeter's famous statue of Sir Redvers Buller. A wealthy aristocrat and Old Etonian who won the Victoria Cross for courage in action in 1879 but was later disgraced, I felt he probably would have voted for Brexit!

This location proved immensely rewarding and we will be seeking to repeat this success at other colleges as well as doing more with Exeter and Plymouth universities.



14 November 2018: Derriford Hospital, Plymouth

A flag-wave outside the main entrance. Plenty of appreciative toots from passing drivers.



12 November 2018, Evening Standard

The public needs to know EU exit is bad for your health, warns doctor turned Tory rebel

15 November 2018, The Guardian

May Brexit plan: a split cabinet, a split party and a split nation

17 November 2018: Plymouth

A lively and positive stall in Plymouth today.

Everyone we spoke with seemed aware of the unfolding national calamity. We gained 52 new joiners, many signing up with the conviction that a People's Vote is now our only way out. Several told us they had voted Leave in 2016 but had now changed their mind. Lots of people

took postcards for Johnny Mercer and Luke Pollard.

My thanks to our wonderful team of 10 volunteers. Special thanks to the Spanish woman who came all the way in from Kingsbridge to volunteer with us for the first time. She is happy in her job in Salcombe and calls Devon "home" but, like so many other EU mainlanders, she is worried about her future and thinking of returning to Spain because of the complications created by Brexit.

How can we bear to lose such people? Answer: we are not going to! We will get our country back and STOP BREXIT!



When chaos rains down
On heads and minds in a dream
The Far Right flood starts

20 November 2018, The Independent

Far-right extremists and hostile states 'will use Brexit to sow hate and chaos in Britain', MPs warned

“Remaining and reforming is the best route forward”

21 November 2018: Exeter

I’ll start my report on today’s stall by quoting the introductory leaflet of [Exeter Students for Europe](#) (ESE). “Our generation, the so-called ‘snowflake generation’, are proud Europeans. We understand the EU to be imperfect, it’s bound to be. However, we see our place within it, reforming it, guiding it, and building a better world as a part of it, not apart from it.”

Heart-warming words, from some heart-warming young people. I love their idealism – the way they naturally attune to European values. And I love their realism – their knowledge that the EU isn’t perfect, but that it’s better to stay in and engage than to leave. “Remaining and reforming is the best route forward”, as the leaflet says in another cogent passage. Indeed! And how I wish their elders understood things half as well.

Our joint stall with ESE, held in the university’s Forum, was a great success, yielding 46 new sign-ups to DfE and an equally long-looking list for ESE. We deliberately kept the DfE presence low-key, so as not to “swamp” the students. We eagerly encouraged passers-by to sign up to both groups. And we added colour with our blue berets and T-shirts, which I believe helped draw people to the stall.

I enjoyed some great conversations, mostly with students and staff who agreed with us.

The few who didn’t argued well and had open minds. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet them all. And not a word of abuse came our way during the entire three hours we were there. Wonderful!

We are very grateful to the combined team of volunteers, three from DfE and five from ESE. Special thanks to ESE’s leader for the excellent liaison in advance of this first experiment. Let’s do it again soon!





22 November 2018: Plymouth

Today belonged to our heroic volunteers, who braved a biting wind to run a street stall outside Plymouth University. It's thanks to your cheerful and never-failing commitment in all weathers that we will win this struggle.

The day started slowly as many people hurried by, unwilling to stop in the cold. But we stuck at it and finished with a grand total of 66 sign-ups – more than in Exeter yesterday. Advantage Plymouth, for a change, probably because we had more volunteers today.

I'm still amazed at the number of people who seem indifferent to the gathering crisis. One of the least favourite things I hear them say as they stride past us is, "I'm all right". "You won't be, when we crash out without a deal," I call after them. But it doesn't seem to work and leaves me feeling like a Jeremiah.

One thing that does work, with another group whom I call "the waverers", is to say "Just say yes". The waverers are the ones who stop and listen when you explain what you're doing, but hesitate to sign up. People enjoy saying yes and, if you invite them to do so, you are often rewarded with an "Oh all right then".

It even works in the wind and cold. So try it!



Street stalls with blue flags
Brilliant stars, smiling folk
Truth and passion shine

“What we were told was a load of crap”

30 November 2018: Exeter

Today’s stall in Exeter was one of the liveliest we have ever seen. People thronged round us and many expressed their anxiety and anger at what is being done to our country.

“What we were told was a load of crap,” said one woman. Like several others who joined us today, she had voted Leave in 2016 but was now a Remainer. More telling still was her equally dismissive reaction to Mrs May’s ‘deal’: “And what we’re being offered now is also a load of crap.”

A People’s Vote is now seen by rapidly rising numbers of people as the only way out of the mess we’re in. People fell over themselves to join us and we gained 146 new supporters in just three hours, many of them students. Our Brexitometer shows an emphatic rejection of Brexit. All Devon’s MPs are urged to join our two brave rebels in Totnes and Exeter in supporting the People’s Vote.

Our politicians had better jump to it if they wish to save their skins. They could and

should have seen this coming. Populist projects always follow the same trajectory: they look good at first, which is why they are popular and people vote for them. But the tide of popular opinion changes swiftly when they start to go wrong, which they invariably do because they are based on lies and propose simple solutions to complex problems – solutions that typically blame a scapegoat. That swift change is what we are now witnessing. And the public’s fury, if Brexit proceeds and fails to deliver, will destroy the political careers of all those left clinging to the wreckage.

Our volunteers excelled themselves. To fight off the cold you rubbed your hands together, jumped up and down, argued with gusto, and pressed leaflets into the hands of passers-by. Thank you! Your commitment and enthusiasm in all weathers is what will carry the day in the end.



1 December 2018: South Brent

Brentonians, as the inhabitants of South Brent call themselves, certainly don't wimp out at a drop of rain. The persistent drizzle didn't deter our volunteers in the slightest. And it was great to have such strong local demand for a stall, with locals outnumbering the DfE regulars who came in from elsewhere. As the Brexit farce lurches towards tragedy, the dynamic of our movement is changing, with action and ownership coming increasingly from the bottom up.

The village was never crowded but a high proportion of those passing by stopped to talk and, in most cases, to sign up. We gained 52 new joiners in just two hours of campaigning.

Brexit is a bit like war – either far too exciting or else, for long stretches of time, monumentally boring. Many said they were sick and tired of hearing the word and just wanted it all to end. Our response to this is that we heartily agree! And that the quickest route to consigning the beastly B-word to oblivion is to sign the petition for a People's Vote and to win that vote 60:40, thereby settling the matter for a generation (as the 2016 referendum didn't).

Our thanks to the nine volunteers. Special thanks to our resident supporters for great local liaison and mustering such a strong team, as well as for coffee and croissants beforehand and a nice pub drink and snack afterwards. South Brent is certainly a very welcoming place.



Politicians think,
'Career first, then my party
Country last of all'

5 December 2018: Totnes

A dramatic stall in gathering darkness in Totnes yesterday afternoon and evening, timed to coincide with the town's late opening for Christmas shopping.

Great chiaroscuro effects, like in a Rembrandt picture, as sign-ups took place by torchlight! It was difficult to read facial cues, but we got plenty of warm comments from people who stopped to engage, even in the rain.

Our location, in the walkway joining Morrisons and Coronation Street, wasn't ideal. A walkway is.... well, just that – and many were in a hurry to reach their cars to avoid a parking fine, or to meet family or friends.

The challenges posed by the rain and the location merely highlight our achievement: we got 49 sign-ups in two-and-a-half hours! And many stopped to complete our Brexitometer, despite the difficulty of attaching stars to damp plastic.

Two strangers came to stand with us to express their support. One said he would like to join us as a volunteer, while the other rigged up an umbrella to shelter our Brexitometer and dispensed B2B stickers with enthusiasm.

Thank you to our valiant rain-resistant volunteers, no less than 11 of you! Lastly, special thanks to the folks at Coffee Couture, who warmed up our mince pies and brought them out to us in exchange for our orders of hot drinks. We recommend your business and the great service we got from your kind and friendly staff.



Photo: Adam Dadeby

7 December 2018: Plymouth College of Art

Our stall outside Plymouth’s College of Art yesterday was a bit of a damp squib. We got off to a late start and ended early, as the rain and wind intensified.

But let’s look on the bright side. In just over an hour’s campaigning we signed up 23 new joiners, dispensed post-cards for Messrs Mercer and Pollard by the dozen, and achieved a Brexitometer that, while less colourful than others we’ve done, nevertheless shows the same picture of public opinion taking shape. Plenty of people

stopped to talk despite the rain, including both college and university students. “Don’t trash my future” was the favourite post-card.

Thanks to our five volunteers, cheerful despite the rain. Special thanks to those who, having previously hung back, responded to the need of the day by stepping into front-line roles, where they demonstrated great skill in engaging with the public. You saved the day and Devon for Europe is grateful for your efforts.



8 December 2018: Plymouth

We took a drenching in Plymouth today! Yet our volunteers were undaunted – cracking jokes, singing carols and generally keeping their spirits well above the water line.

It was sticky going. People are often willing to engage when rain is light, but few wanted to stop in today’s deluge. Never mind! We still signed up 41 new joiners, among them the friendly barista at nearby Costa’s, the source of a welcome round of hot drinks. Abuse was low level: one man told me I was “full of shit” – but I just grinned, bowed slightly and said that, in that case, I was sure he would excuse me from talking further with him.

In the last half hour we concentrated on persuading people to have a go on our two Brexitometers, specially designed, on this

Day of Action, to send a strong message to Plymouth’s MPs. I think we succeeded. Are you listening, Johnny Mercer and Luke Pollard?

We had our largest ever team on a stall, 18 in number. As on other stalls recently, two passing strangers gave up their plans for the day and came to stand with us instead. A special welcome also to the two continental EU citizens who joined our team. And to the strong South Brent contingent!

It wasn’t just our people who got soaked; our leaflets did too. I dried them out as best I could on our living room floor. Now they must be packed up and made ready for our next foray: Plymouth University on Monday. On, on!

We have now suffered The Tory psychodrama For more than two years

10 December 2018: Plymouth University

Today's stall at Plymouth Uni was viable – just! Huge thanks to our volunteer on staff there, for appearing at just the right moment to make up the five needed to get started, and for coming down again during his lunch hour.



This time the weather was sunnier – and so were the students! We signed up 60 people in three hours, many of them young. Post-cards to MPs proved popular, especially “Don’t trash my future”. And our Brexitometer made another fine picture for Plymouth MP Johnny Mercer.

Despite our better “score” in Plymouth on this occasion, I was struck by the number of young people who remain indifferent to the evil being done to our country by Mrs May and her ministers. Far too many still walk by with an “I’m all right, thanks” – or, worse, a “You’re all right!” “I’m not”, I call after them. But they don’t care, wishing only to remain fast asleep, unperturbed by any ill so long as it is happening to others, not them. As Dante says of the “neutrals”, in the first circle of hell, “I never knew death had undone so many.”

Thanks to our able band of volunteers, especially those from the university. Having the younger generation well represented on the stall made a big difference to its “pull”. Come again next time, please!

“I never knew death had undone so many”



13 December 2018: Exeter College

"I'm a member of Krauts for Brexit," said a clean-faced but serious-looking young man who approached our stall outside Exeter College today.

I decided to play for time. "I... beg your pardon," I said.

"I'm a member, in fact ze founding member, of Krauts for Brexit." He still looked serious.

"Erm... does that mean you're... actually... in favour of this country leaving the EU?" I enquired cautiously. I felt dim-witted asking this, but thought I ought to make quite sure before going any further.

"Ja," said my interlocutor. "We Germans want you British out because we want Germany to be ze most powerful country in Europe."

It wasn't until he nudged me in the ribs, grinned and said "I'm joking" that I realized I'd been had! We had a good laugh together, his eyes sparkling mischievously. Then he signed up to join us. He was from Berlin, a 17-year-old studying science at the college while his parents lived and worked in Exeter. While we spoke, an English friend came up and asked him if he was coming to the pub.

This is the up side of the EU – a social integration between the races that comes as naturally to the young as playing football, falling in love or having a drink together, and that gives them the confidence to make jokes that their grandparents could not have made. From them we hear none of the poison and cynicism that infect the older generation. If you want to regain your faith in humanity, go on a street stall that attracts the young.

This one was very successful. In just three hours we gained 130 new sign-ups. We encouraged students from parts of Devon other than Exeter or Totnes to take post-cards to send to their MPs. Many did so, their favourite being "Don't trash my future".

A fitful wind chilled our fingers and scattered our leaflets. This, plus a shortage of volunteers, meant we decided not to run a Brexitometer. Huge thanks to our small but brilliant team of three, undaunted by the cold. Afterwards, we repaired to the Boston Tea Party for warming hot chocolate and other sweet things. A great day in great company!



This is the only political issue in my lifetime
that I've wept over. I no longer feel proud of my country"

14 December 2018: Dartington

I'll start my report on today's stall with a
word in praise of our host, Ben's Farm Shop (aka Riverford), a great favourite among
ecologically minded locals ("Totnessy types")



as well as visiting weekenders. Small businesses that nail their colours to the mast deserve our admiration as well as our thanks. It takes courage to do this, as some customers may be upset by it. So thank you for having us, Ben and co – and may your pro-EU business long flourish.

As we took our place, suitably, alongside the fruit and nuts and among the Christmas trees outside the front of the shop, we felt relaxed. Our stall here would be a quieter, safer affair than some of our recent gigs. We had decided to run it during the period of maximum footfall, 10.30 am to 3.30 pm. This made a long day for our volunteers, but we were able to rotate lunch breaks at the shop's excellent café, which serves fresh food cooked from locally grown ingredients. Thanks to our five volunteers for staying the course.



There were lots of customers, but they came in small pulses throughout the day, so our stall was never swamped. Most were Remainers, but we did have a few Leavers, including one man who told us,

bluntly, "You're wrong" and said we shouldn't be there. By the end of the day we had signed up 80 people and developed a fine looking Brexitometer.

The grief and pain caused by Brexit show no sign of easing. "This is the only political issue in my lifetime that I've wept over," said 69-year-old Alice Campbell, who lives in Buckfastleigh. Alice taught English as a foreign language in Portugal and Morocco before settling down to start a family in the late 1970s. Her grown-up daughter, a long-term resident of France who was deprived of a vote, could scarcely believe the news on that fateful morning of June 2016, and nor could her son. Both have felt themselves to be European all their lives and were gutted by the result. Alice adds: "I no longer feel proud of my country, of my roots. Our far right politicians, especially the ERG, are not thinking of the country's interests."

One man about to enter the shop said he felt doubtful about a People's Vote, believing it could prove even more divisive than the 2016 referendum. I argued with him, using the "informed consent" metaphor coined by our MP Sarah Wollaston and pointing at the shift in public opinion suggested by our Brexitometer. I also told him about the hopes and fears of the students at Exeter College, 130 of whom we had signed up the previous day. By the time he came out of the shop, he had changed his mind and agreed to sign the petition and join us.

Hopes and fears – flavours of the season. A happy Christmas to all our supporters. And, all right then, even to the dwindling band of Leavers, because they will all change their minds eventually. We just wish they'd hurry up!

19 December 2018, politicshome.com

Two more senior Tory MPs say they will quit the party if Theresa May backs a no-deal Brexit

Go Anna Soubry!
With your increasing passion,
Wild hair and eyes! Yes!



“Mulled wine and mince pies were a great morale booster, as were the lovely people who were so grateful for what we were doing”

22 December 2018: Exeter

Today’s all-day street stall in Princesshay, Exeter saw us in festive mood.

We set out to create a different atmosphere – still campaigning against Brexit, but in a friendly, non-confrontational way. We greeted people by wishing them a happy Christmas and offering them mince pies and (non-alcoholic) mulled wine, as well as the opportunity to find out about Devon for

Europe and talk about Brexit, whatever their views on it.

This approach went down well. One of our volunteers writes: “Mulled wine and mince pies were a great morale booster, as were the lovely people who were so grateful for what we were doing.” We met many charming young families, often with members from other countries – Turkey, Spain, France,



Germany. Of course there were exceptions – a few Leavers in decidedly Scrooge-like mood. I met one self-confessed fascist, a woman who chilled me to the bone. But overall we felt warmly welcomed and that our message – that the People’s Vote is the only way out of our current mess – is being increasingly heard and acted on. We dispensed more post-cards for Devon’s MPs than ever before.

A total of 31 volunteers worked with us at some stage during the day. You know who you are and what a wonderful job you did. Thank you all so much! Between us we achieved 238 sign-ups during our 6-hour shift. And our collecting tin seemed to fill up with generous donations.

Special thanks to the managers and staff at nearby Carluccio’s, who kindly warmed up our mince pies and wine on their premises and brought them out to us. Firm supporters of our cause, managers Jeremy and Fred also offered a 20% discount on all food and drink consumed by our volunteers throughout the

day. This was a generous offer, gratefully accepted by several of us. I can recommend Carluccio’s sea-food lasagna!

This was our last stall of 2018, so let me end this report by wishing all our volunteers and supporters a happy Christmas and New Year’s break. I’ll “close out” with the words of Steve Bray, interviewed by the New European outside the House of Commons, where he has demonstrated against Brexit every day since the 2016 referendum:

“I am absolutely certain that we will not leave the EU and that we will come out of this a stronger and more unified country than we were before. All of the most deprived areas I know voted for Brexit because they genuinely thought the people campaigning for it were their friends and that they cared. I think they know now who their real friends are. After this is all over, we must become a lot more compassionate as a society and be willing to listen a lot more.”

Amen to that.

New Statesman, 3 January 2019

A Singapore-style economy would be bad for public services – and worse for women

Oh yes, Singapore
A grand financial model
And a police state

5 January 2019: Newton Abbot

Opinion in Newton Abbot today was as sharply polarized as ever, but the public mood is spiralling downwards.

Well over half the people we spoke with expressed despair, anxiety, even panic, at what is happening at the moment. Media coverage of the preparations for no deal is having the opposite effect to what the government intended: far from inducing the public to rally round May's deal, it is making them reject it all the more. "How can we have reached this point?" "Why are our politicians behaving so irresponsibly?" "Why is our country being turned into a laughing stock, a pariah state?" People are incredulous, verging on incandescent with anger.

The rest – a dwindling minority of hard-core Leave voters – are still in favour of Brexit and unable to come to terms with the imminent

death of their project. To them, worries about no deal are just "Project Fear". Their airy assertion that everything will be all right smacks of an extraordinary unrealism. Leavers know they have no arguments left, but instead of confronting reality they are burying their heads in the sand, retreating into the bunker. "I don't want to discuss it" was their commonest refrain. Mainly they were elderly and infirm, and it seems a sad comfort to draw from this the conclusion that they will mostly soon be dead and gone. This is what the dying throes of imperialist nostalgia look like – and it makes a sorry sight.

Many people seemed aware of the latest outrage, exposed on Channel 4 yesterday evening: that the government has awarded a contract for ferry operations to a company that has no ferries, displays terms and conditions



nicked from a take-away, and is run by an alleged fraudster. This is what happens in the early stages of fascism: a criminal government turns to criminals to do its dirty work for it, because no honest businessman will touch it.

A health worker I spoke with expressed anguish over the loss of EU care workers, nurses and doctors from her GP practice in Teignmouth and at Torbay Hospital. People are packing their bags and leaving Britain in despair. They are not being replaced and remaining staff are coming under immense pressure.

In three hours we signed up 51 new supporters, many of whom agreed to send post-cards to Newton Abbot's MP, Anne Marie Morris. We also developed a Brexitometer that sends her a resounding message. Not known for listening to her constituents, it remains to be seen whether this will make her sit up and pay attention. We can but hope.

The darkest hour is always just before dawn – and I think that's what we're going through right now. Hope seems a strange note to end on, but I'm more convinced than ever that it's warranted.



“The vote to Leave was very selfish”

12 January 2019: Ivybridge

“This really has got to go back to the people,” says Marc Chapman, a former mayor of Ivybridge, whom we met on our street stall today.

Born and bred in Ivybridge, Chapman is proud of his years of service to the town, where he started as a councillor in 2001, rising to deputy mayor in 2004, then mayor from 2005 to 2007. “Serving my community as mayor is one of the most memorable times of my life,” he says.

Chapman feels the town – the largest in the South Hams – has benefitted only indirectly from EU membership, a factor that partly explains its high Leave vote in 2016. Crucially, he believes the vote would go differently today. “If we had known then what we know now, the result would surely have been Remain.”

Chapman’s main reason for supporting a People’s Vote is for his children’s sake. “We’re fighting for them today, for the world they’ll inherit,” he says. “The vote to Leave was very selfish.”

Would that more of his generation felt the same way. Chapman’s concern for the young stands in stark contrast to the response of one woman we spoke with, who said: “I couldn’t care less what happens to my grandchildren.” Shocking!

Ivybridge was livelier yesterday than on previous occasions and nearly all of us enjoyed good conversations, with Leavers as well as Remainers. We gained only 28 new supporters, but several who were unwilling to sign up took away post-cards for Southwest Devon’s MP Sir Gary Streeter, who should find a full mail-bag when he comes to the House for Tuesday’s critical vote. He’ll also receive a photo of our Brexitometer, which gives him another nudge in the right direction.

“I couldn’t care less what happens to my grandchildren”

Lots of people were sympathetic to the Remain cause but still not convinced that a new referendum was the best way forward, fearing that it undermines democracy. I enjoyed a boisterous sparring match on this topic with the manager at the nearby Warrens bakery, who came to our stall to offer us a pound off on take-away pasties.

“That’s a nice offer,” I said. “Tell you what, I’ll trade you: we’ll take you up on it if you sign up to join Devon for Europe.” She wasn’t having it, so we embarked on a passionate but joyous set-to, trading blows nimbly but with mounting intensity. We ended up hugging each other, roaring with laughter and saying how much we’d enjoyed the exchange. Dialogues of this quality with those we disagree with are all too rare. We need a few more like the manager at Warrens!

Another woman who was against a People’s Vote got the better of me. I countered her argument – “We’ve had a vote and we have to accept the result” – with the house purchase metaphor, which I often use to illustrate the

concept of informed consent. “You fall in love with a house and put an offer in for it. And, much to your surprise, that offer gets accepted,” I said. “What do you do next?”

“You buy it.”

“Not necessarily. You get a survey done. If the survey tells you the house is as good as it looks, then you can go ahead and buy it. But if the survey tells you the house looks good but actually it’s full of dry rot, do you have to go ahead still?”

“I do if I live in Scotland!”

She swept off triumphantly. “Game, set and match to you,” I called after her. Any ideas on how I could have bested her? Answers on a DfE post-card please!

These were fun moments in a place that doesn’t often enthrall. Thank you to our excellent volunteers, including several newcomers. We had more than enough to run the stall, so six people went leafleting instead and delivered some 750 leaflets to the town’s outlying estates.



Outside parliament Dedicated warriors Fight for People’s Vote

15 January 2019, [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk)

Theresa May’s deal is voted down in historic Commons defeat



19 January 2019: St Marychurch

Despite a grey forecast, the sun came out for us in St Marychurch today and if you held your face at the right angle, was surprisingly warm. It was a good omen.

The attractive pedestrian precinct that is the centre of this large village, long merged with greater Torquay, was desperately quiet, perhaps typical of the decline of the high street so widely reported across the country. A shame, as it has a fine traditional fishmonger, butcher and newsagent – all small independent businesses whose future is surely at risk.

A high proportion of the people who did venture out were “old grumbletonians” – grim-faced elderly Leavers who weren’t changing their minds. “I don’t want to discuss it” was their usual refrain, but those who did engage often told us we were undermining democracy.

One Leaver said, “If there’s another referendum, I’m not going to vote.” Our volunteer had to suppress a giggle. “Good”, she thought, but of course resisted the temptation to say so.

A few old people bucked the trend. I signed up an old blind man, who gratefully accepted a badge, and a 97-year-old gave us his strong moral support. Both were passionate Remainers who believed Brexit to be a terrible mistake and thought we should put the young first.

Our articulate, well informed volunteers excelled themselves and, by persevering for the full three hours, we signed up 59 people – a superb result for this difficult location. We also gave out plenty of post-cards and completed a Brexitometer that sends a firm message to local MP Kevin Foster. A separate leafleting team delivered over 2000 leaflets in the surrounding area. Altogether, a great day’s work.

“I’m not going to shake your hand. We’re at war”

26 January 2019: Plymouth

If ever there was a tipping point this was it. Today felt like the day Devon for Europe became a mass movement.

Our stall in Plymouth city centre attracted nearly 40 volunteers. About half of these were Devon for Europe “regulars”, but we were augmented by a great crew of People’s Vote supporters, who marked this national Day of Action by coming in from across the county to lend our efforts wings.

Our stall was positively mobbed by members of the public. We signed up 128 new joiners and all three of Plymouth’s MPs will shortly receive a sack-full of post-cards urging them to support a People’s Vote. Our two Brexitometers reinforced the message. The desire for a People’s Vote is strongly linked to the feeling that we now know far more about the EU and Brexit than we did in 2016.

Not only were the numbers of people coming to our stall high but there seemed to be a new intensity in our interactions with them. Several volunteers reported fascinating conversations with Leavers; a few people confessed to having changed

their minds; many – both Leavers and Remainers – expressed anxiety, even “terror”, over what the future holds. Talk of No Deal is leaving its mark on the public mind. A few indignantly cited the requisitioning of Brittany ferries to bring in emergency food and medical supplies. How come a democratically elected government feels itself not just able but duty bound to inflict this level of suffering on our people?

One of our keenest volunteers was Wera Hobhouse, MP (Lib Dem) for Bath, down here on a visit to cheer on her party’s candidate for the Totnes constituency, Caroline Voaden. “I’m in my element here,” said Wera, who co-founded our successful sister group, Bath for Europe. After completing our Brexitometer, Wera picked up some of our leaflets and engaged directly with the public. A passionate pro-European, Wera is a member of the cross-party Parliamentary committee for exiting the EU and thus an important ally. In a recent speech she decried the “race to the bottom” likely to occur on environmental issues after Brexit. It was great to have her with us.





30 January 2019, yougov.co.uk

Brexit indecisiveness is seriously damaging Corbyn

A disappointing number of Leavers are still resolute in their refusal to face reality. One man with whom I had a feisty exchange refused my proffered hand at the end of it. "I'm not going to shake your hand," he said, "We're at war."

That was sobering, so let's end on a lighter note. Another man I met railed against foreign domination through the EU. "That Myrtle," he said. "She rules us. We're ruled by a German!" I thought, but did not say: more power to you, Myrtle. Even though you don't

actually rule Europe you deserve to, because you're the only leader we have with any stature, head and shoulders above the others. "Up with Myrtle", I say. "And down with the maggots that infest our body politic and claim to govern us."

My thanks to all who made our day such a success and kept our spirits high despite the intermittent rain and gusting wind. Special thanks to the three students who came down from Exeter.

Corbyn betrays us
The referendum was bent
But he wants Brexit

“Human kind cannot bear very much reality”



2 February 2019: Plympton

“Human kind cannot bear very much reality,” wrote T. S. Eliot. He might have been describing the Leavers of Plympton. Offered our leaflet on facts about Britain and the EU, they regularly declined it with a wave of the hand or a disdainful “I don’t want your facts.”

The persistence of the Brexit myth never ceases to amaze. As the country falls apart, the Leavers cling to their disaster with ever greater zeal. Not even the requisitioning of Brittany ferries to bring in emergency supplies of food and medicines daunts them. Factory closures? Project Fear. And sick fantasies abound: the EU is run by Nazis, said one angry man.

Our stall, in a shady and draughty part of the town’s pedestrian precinct, was icy cold. The sharp air seemed to sharpen tongues, and we endured some bad-tempered abuse. One woman rang the manager at the adjacent Co-op to complain about our Bollocks to Brexit sticker.

In these tough conditions, our team performed heroically. Their dedication and persistence

seem to know no limits. We signed up 60 new joiners – a great result for this difficult place – and dished out scores of post-cards for MP Sir Gary Streeter. Our Brexitometer gave its usual resounding verdict on Brexit and its consequences, now so painfully adrift of what we were promised as surely to awaken even the most diehard believer. But no – for the most part they remain fast asleep.

Our spirits were lifted by the arrival of Julie Girling, one of the South West’s MEPs. Julie engaged with our volunteers as well as with members of the public and said how much she appreciated what we are doing. Her voice of reason was a joy to hear, so different to the vacuous slogans and mendacious posturing of our national politicians. One of the few good things to come out of Brexit is that our MEPs are moving closer to the people they represent, helping to break down the feeling of remoteness of the EU and its institutions that doubtless contributed to the Leave vote.



9 February 2019: Buckfastleigh

How many of the good people of Buckfastleigh know that the EU was a donor to the town centre's refurbishment, completed in 1999?

We didn't, until one of our volunteers spotted the plaque, laid into the handsome cobbles beside our street stall. The money came through the EU's Regional Development Fund. The extra bit of pedestrian-friendly civic space created 20 years ago provided the perfect spot for today's stall in defence of this largely unloved and unknown benefactor.

The town was quiet, but with few exceptions its people were warm and welcoming. The demographic was mixed, with younger people and families alongside the elderly. The town is clearly drawing in people who might have bought homes in Totnes a decade ago. Along with the town centre, much of the housing stock has been refurbished and there were few vacant shops along the now one-way Fore Street. Buckfastleigh today is a different town to the run-down, traffic-blighted non-place of 20 years ago. It's a classic example of the knock-on benefits of investment, showing that, with the EU, you cannot just compare money in and money out, as so many Leavers do.

Almost everyone we spoke to either signed up to join us or expressed support. We gained 57 new joiners in three hours of campaigning, by a large team of 13 volunteers. Local MP Mel Stride will get a sackful of post-cards on Monday, together with a photo of our Brexitometer, which sends one of the strongest messages we've seen yet seen from any comparable small town across the county.

Of course, not everyone was pleased to see us. One man started banging on about defeating the Germans in two world wars and how we were aiding and abetting Nazism. Why does there always have to be one of these people, on every single stall?! Another local man, known to me, spewed vitriolic hatred over my activities at our community shop in Holne. It would have been nice to be spared such rubbish in this, my home town. Ah well, no prophet is ever welcome in his own land.



Tell us right now, May What bribes are you preparing For votes for your Deal?

12 February 2019: Dartington

Our first sign-up at today's stall in Dartington was Dan Mifsud, owner of the [Almond Thief](#), the successful small bakery café that had kindly agreed to host us.

The core of the business is its sourdough bread, so good that people will do a round trip of 20 miles or more to buy it. Round that, Dan has added other goodies including excellent coffee, freshly made sandwiches, Mediterranean pastries and, recently, a tasty breakfast and lunch menu. Housed in a former industrial unit, the café is a favourite meeting place for locals, including a young clientele armed with mobiles and laptops.

Born in the UK to Maltese parents, Dan is of the generation that began life as a European and took that identity for granted. He started his career as a scientist but soon switched to the food sector, becoming first a chef then an ice-cream maker before launching the Almond Thief four years ago. The success achieved in that short period bodes well for the future and Dan plans modest expansion. "We'll refurbish to make room for a few more people and start opening in the evening," he says.

There's just one fly in the dough: Brexit. "We can't know how things will turn out," Dan says. "I expect to pay more for ingredients, especially those sourced from the continent. But there could also be an up side, if local

food sovereignty benefits." However, it is in personal rather than business terms that Brexit brings the greatest uncertainty. This year, as an insurance policy, Dan applied for Maltese citizenship, a process that proved lengthy and difficult but was ultimately successful. "I'm glad I've done that," he says.

With Dan's encouragement, we set up our stall just outside the door into the café, where we were able to catch customers as they came and went. Virtually everyone we spoke with appreciated our efforts and we signed up 61 new supporters. Many were women with babies, attending the Tuesday meeting of Dartington's young mothers' club. We enjoyed some great conversations on a wider range of subjects than usual, including climate change and biodiversity in addition to the prospects for a People's Vote.

The secret to a high rate of sign-ups in such places is long and slow. The stall opened at 10.00 am and kept going until 3.00 pm. Our eight volunteers spaced themselves out over the day, enjoying relaxing breaks in the café whenever needed. Many thanks to them.

And thanks also to Dan and his staff for hosting us. Keep up the great work and good luck with that expansion. Our part is to make sure Brexit won't pose you any problems: by stopping it!



Bullies, tyrants laugh At well mannered appeasement Fight against the Right!

16 February 2019: Chudleigh

"Rude, please," said the young woman, on her way to ballet class with two children in tow.

Middle-class Remainers tend to be polite people, but they like their propaganda on the blunt side. Offered "rude" or "polite" stickers, this customer was conventionally well mannered in expressing her choice – "Bollocks to Brexit" instead of "Love the UK? Stop Brexit". It came over as bizarrely comic, like a Monty Python sketch.

Leavers tend to be more prudish, ticking us off for using "bad language". Odd, because they are often intemperate in their language towards us. But you can never generalize. One of the keenest of our new joiners today was a man whose every other word seemed to be "f***ing".

We were in Chudleigh, an inoffensive, some would say dull, country town south of Exeter, the sort of place where you wouldn't expect

much in the way of swearing and shouting. And in fact we didn't get much: a few finger waggings came by, one of them twice, to give us a big ticking off for being there at all; one of our number was berated for being a traitor by a truck driver delivering to the Co-op; and I blew all my carefully crafted guidelines on anger management in a furious exchange with three women who accused me of undermining democracy. I said sorry afterwards, but I have to admit I found it cathartic. And who knows, perhaps the heat of my response gave them pause for thought.

On the up side, we were lucky to be standing on the route to the ballet class, as several similar families to the one mentioned above came along and all of them joined us. Plenty of others also signed up, including a number who had voted Leave and changed their minds. In all, we welcomed 56 new supporters, a strong result on this quiet,



drizzly morning. MP Mel Stride will receive another batch of post-cards urging him to support a People's Vote and another strong message to the same effect from our Brexitometer.

A kind man brought us bananas – curved ones – from the community fridge, an innovative project to reduce food waste run by a community action group called Search. It was an indicator that there could be more going on in this quiet town than meets the eye of the superficial visitor.

But were we ourselves too quiet? Do we make enough of a stir when we come to such places? Or are we too polite, too low-key, in our campaigning? Answers on a Devon for Europe post-card please.

Our (almost) infallibly well mannered volunteers were 13 in number. My own well mannered (and middle-class) thanks to them all.



Three million plus Disenfranchised overnight Who speaks out for them?

"I'll come back if conditions improve"

22 February 2019: Exeter

Today the stories came thick and fast – personal stories of how Brexit is affecting people's lives. Here are three of them.

My first sign-up of the day came as I enjoyed an early morning coffee at Carluccio's, the Italian café near our stall location in central

Exeter. Tom, a waiter there, told me he plans to migrate to Canada. He wants to build a new career as a landscape photographer in a country with liberal values where diversity is celebrated. When I ordered a second coffee, Tom told me it was on the house, in grateful

recognition of Devon for Europe's efforts. Half the staff at Carluccio's are from the continent, he told me, and all share the same feelings of alienation from a country they once loved. Brexit is deeply hurtful to such people – a hurt to which Leavers seem indifferent.

Next I met an Italian woman from Venice, married to a Palestinian. She has just completed a PhD at the University of Exeter, but now she is planning to leave. Although she has been here nearly 10 years, she fell short of the requirements for settled status because her stay has not been continuous. A solicitor to whom she turned for help told her not only that her own application was problematic but that her husband would "never get through" the bureaucratic process. They both realized they could not afford to keep on trying. They leave Britain in a few days from now.

"I'll come back if conditions improve," she said. The sadness in her voice told me all I needed to know about her love for our country and her grief over what we have become.

Last of my three stories came tumbling out from a woman in late middle age who told me, with tears in her eyes, that she was half German, half English. Her father was a German POW, billeted on a farm near Crediton in the early 1940s. He fell in love with the farmer's daughter and married her secretly. It all came out eventually and the couple were forgiven by both sets of parents when she, the first grandchild, was born.

When the institutions that now form the EU began to take shape in the late 1950s, her father and mother were delighted. "Now they must be turning in their graves," said their daughter. She added, with a note of defiance: "You can take England out of Europe, but you can't take Europe out of the English."

These stories came amidst a tumult of voices around us, as people thronged to our stall. We were busy from the start, and kept going for an extra hour to cater for the demand. We signed up 190 new joiners! Last in our busy day came a lovely family of six, who all took post-cards to send to their MP Hugo Swire. Interest in the big London march on 23 March was keen and we gave out hundreds of leaflets on the coaches going from different parts of Devon. This promises to be bigger than Iraq!

My thanks to our amazing volunteers, who included several newcomers in addition to the "stall-warts", the ones whose support is rock solid and who seem always to be there.

One final story: as I was parking the car at the start of the day a man came up to me and said "You're Michael Palin, aren't you." I smiled and said, "No, I'm not, I'm afraid." "Yes you are," he insisted, "I'm delighted to meet you!" And he continued to smile and wave at me as I started walking up Southernhay. Well, I thought, if Brexit knocks us for six financially, all is not lost: a new career as a Michael Palin impersonator beckons.

I feel my country Is under Occupation By tyrants and fools

“From now on I’m always going to vote”

23 February 2019: Torquay

Torquay has been a sticky wicket for us in the past, difficult and depressing. Today there was electricity in the air.

We arrived to find UKIP occupying our intended pitch, outside Primark on Union Street. Had they known we were coming and moved in deliberately? Probably, but no matter. We set up a few yards away and I walked over to establish diplomatic relations. Their stall leader showed me an array of Commonwealth flags – the flags of countries that, as he put it, Britain had “shafted” when we joined Europe 40 years ago. After a bit of chat I offered him a high five and said “Peace”, which he repeated. That set the tone for the day and we had no problems with them, apart from some obnoxious sniping from a troublemaker for a few minutes when our stall opened. Later on some of our people went over to ask them questions, which, for the most part, they seemed unable or unwilling to answer.

On our own stall, we soon noticed an exciting change in the public mood. Far more people engaged with us than during previous visits. In just under four hours we signed up 97 new supporters, a phenomenal result for this Leave-voting town.

Most exciting was the immediate uptake of coach tickets for the London march on 23 March. “Yes, I’m definitely coming,” said Alison Furness, “I can’t wait.” She was one of about 10 people to commit on the spot. For the two previous marches, people were slow to book seats and it was touch-and-go whether we would fill them. This time we can’t hold people back – a sign that the march will be very big indeed.

Another taker was Lisa Manley, who epitomized Torquay’s shift in public awareness. “I never voted and didn’t want to get political,” she says. “I lived in a bubble, doing my job but not much else.” That all changed when a friend explained Brexit and its



implications to her in ways she could understand. “From now on, I’m always going to vote,” she said triumphantly. We hugged her and gave her a round of applause. Lisa promised to go on line to send a strong message to local MP Kevin Foster, urging him to support a People’s Vote. She too will come on the coach, with as many members of her family as she can muster.

One kind family, who will also be on the coach, brought us cakes to say thank you for what we were doing. It was half term and the town was in almost festive mood, with plenty of visitors and lots of young families out and about.

Lastly, we met (and also hugged) a lovely man who sported a shirt with “We are all immigrants”

embroidered on it – his way of protesting the rising tide of racism that had come out of the 2016 referendum.

Our 20 volunteers excelled themselves. Normally, I’m the last to wish to bring a stall to an end, but this time a core group of them outdid even my enthusiasm, not wanting to quit until we had seen off UKIP. So we did an extra hour, taking us through to 2.00 pm. How’s that for dedication?

I believe that the strength of our campaigning married to the slow but steady shift in public awareness mean that, when it comes to the People’s Vote, we’ll win hands down. Watch out UKIP, we’re going to get our country back!



“I feel like we’re tipping into a black hole, not knowing what’s at the bottom”

26 February 2019: Plymouth University

“I’m loving it”, says Sam Large.

Sam is referring to his degree course at the University of Plymouth. He’s in his first year of studies for an MSc in environmental science. But the typical student Sam is not. For starters, he’s 46 years old.

Born and bred in Plymouth, Sam used to be a taxi driver. Fed up with the long hours he had to work just to maintain his income, he decided to pack it in and acquire the tertiary education he’d missed out on earlier in life. “Environmental science was a subject that interested me,” Sam says. “So I applied for, and got, a student’s grant and a maintenance loan. And now here I am, a mature student!”

Sam voted Leave in the 2016 referendum. At that time he was still a taxi driver and suffering because of the increased competition from an influx of Polish drivers prepared to work long hours. “Suddenly there were 25 cabs on the rank instead of 7”, he says. “Fares stayed the same, but you had to wait longer to get one.”

Since starting his studies, Sam has begun to question that decision. Though he hasn’t changed his mind yet, he feels he might vote Remain in a second referendum. His discussions with lecturers and students have made him aware of what we will lose by leaving. They have broadened his

horizons beyond the narrow sectoral rationale that drove his 2016 decision. His experiences and concerns at that time were real (and show that many Leavers had legitimate grievances), but a focus on those alone was not a good basis for making the decision. “We were not well informed,” he says. “We had no idea what were getting into. Now I feel like we’re tipping into a black hole, not knowing what’s at the bottom.”

Sam’s journey from Leaver to Remainer isn’t complete yet. He wasn’t ready to join Devon for Europe, but he did take away our leaflets and said he would continue to think about it. I wished him well and said, “Just keep moving in the direction you’re going in.” He smiled, thanked me, and left.

I felt optimistic after he had gone. It takes courage and integrity to acknowledge that you may have called something wrong. These are rare qualities and Sam may be the exception not the rule in possessing them. But I hope and pray that others are on a similar trajectory in sufficient numbers to reverse the catastrophe of 2016.

Our stall, in brilliant sunshine just outside the university, was an enjoyable experience. Footfall wasn’t high, but we still signed up 82 new joiners, nearly all of them students a good deal younger than Steve.



2 March 2019: Ashburton

Our stall in Ashburton today was a lively affair that yielded 89 sign-ups.

Star turn among the new joiners was Jane Sapling. Aged 86, Jane radiates optimism, often breaking into smiles or laughter. She first attracted my attention because of the spring flowers that decorated her hat and her mobility aid. Her attitude to life proved no less positive: she seems to light up the lives of all she meets.

Jane voted Leave in the 2016 referendum, but given another vote today she'd opt to Remain. She says that she and many others of her generation feel they were misled. Jane has seven grandchildren and a further seven great grandchildren. "For their sakes, I've changed my mind," she says. Jane had a go

on our Brexitometer and proudly put on an EU citizen badge. Would there were a good few more like her!

One thing I'll never forget about Devon for Europe is the camaraderie and teamwork among our volunteers. Today they once again excelled themselves. So many were they that we were able to detail two of them to go off prospecting for business sponsorship for the big London march on 23 March. The idea is a Devon for Europe banner with the names and logos of supporting businesses on it. I'm pleased to say we obtained initial expressions of interest from four businesses.





5 March 2019: Totnes

Totnes wasn't busy today, but a high proportion of people we spoke to engaged with us.

We decided not to run a Brexitometer, mainly because Totnes's MP Sarah Wollaston is already a strong supporter of the People's Vote so doesn't need to be persuaded. That meant we could concentrate on signing people up and telling them about the coaches to London for the big march on 23 March.

This strategy worked. With only nine volunteers we gained 96 new joiners in just three hours. Several of us "scored 10", then went on to score a good few more. We also gave out hundreds of leaflets advertising the coaches and met many people who said they would come themselves and spread the word to others.

As usual, Totnes was full of delightful characters. Last caller at our stall was a man who went by the name of Alexander the Great, who stopped to attach some Bollocks to Brexit stickers to his bike.

Leavers were as allergic to facts as ever. One of our volunteers met a man from the motor trade:

Man: "They're bound to do a deal with us. Did you know that German car manufacturers sell

more cars to the UK than to the rest of the world put together?"

Volunteer: "Are you sure? Sounds a bit unlikely to me."

Man: "Yes, it's a fact."

Volunteer (having Googled it): "No, sorry, you're misinformed about that. Car sales to the UK from Germany amount to just 1 in 7 of those produced."

Man: "You're wrong!"

Volunteer (showing mobile phone): "No, honestly – have a look at this."

Man (turning away): "Rubbish! There's no talking with you people."

The day started bright, but clouded over and eventually the rain came in and a cold breeze chilled our feet and hands. Despite the discomfort our volunteers were their usual cheerful selves. Our thanks to them.



Poor Tim Berners Lee

The world wide web for our good

Used for global tricks

15 March 2019: Exeter

Our stall in Exeter today yielded the usual high number of sign-ups in this strongly Remain-supporting city. Over 100 joined us!

We had been going for an hour when [Extinction Rebellion](#) came past. Which made our staid and static stall look dull by comparison.

These young ones are going to change the world. They had energy, vision, fire in their bellies. They greeted us with cheers, understanding at a glance that we are allies (how can you fight climate change in isolation?!). And the wit and wisdom in their placards was inspiring. We need to take a leaf from what they are doing: if we can

inject our campaign to Remain with half their fervour and conviction we'll win easily.

I spent half the time laughing for joy while giving them high fives, and the other

half snapping madly. To hell with stuffy government ministers who say they should stay in school!





23 March 2019: London

On Saturday 23 March we marched again in London, over a million of us! Here are some pics that capture the excitement.



Help! Call a doctor! The stench of a dead empire Has driven us mad

“You’re traitors! You should be hanged!”

30 March 2019: Newton Abbot

“I won’t vote ever again in my life.” That was one Leaver’s reaction to the government’s failure to deliver Brexit on “Brexit Day”, 29 March – the day before our Saturday morning street stall in Newton Abbot.

Alongside disillusion, anger ran high. Echoing the speeches outside the Commons the day before, Leavers told us we were traitors and should be “strung up”. I endured several outpourings of foul racist abuse, in one case directed against Muslims. Expletives hit an all-time high.

We had expected this and warned against it at the start of the stall, but even so it was hard to stomach. We kept a watchful eye out for each other and joined in each other’s difficult conversations. It was striking how easily we can be trapped: one reasonably made point

about the language and arguments used by fascists in the 1930s elicited a torrent of abuse and a complaint to a watching policeman.

Leavers’ anger is understandable, but it is difficult to convey our sympathy when we are seen as “the enemy”. I asked one man why he thought Brexit had gone so wrong. “It’s you lot who are to blame,” he replied, jabbing with his finger. We are vulnerable to such accusations at present: would Parliament be so paralysed if a million had not marched in London a week ago? All we can do in response is point to the lies that have brought us to this place. But many are still in denial over the collapse of their project and prefer “stab-in-the-back” narratives: Brexit isn’t intrinsically flawed and would work out fine if it wasn’t for this or that group of people



who were sabotaging it. This is the classic scapegoating of full-blown fascism, indicating a dangerous moment for our country.

Yet there was light in the darkness. Most volunteers reported interesting exchanges, including some with Leavers who were questioning their 2016 decision. Those behind the tables said that members of the public spontaneously approached them to express their gratitude for our work. In a stall that lasted over three hours, we gained 104 new joiners, an excellent result for this Leave-voting town. Anne Marie Morris will get a sack-full of post-cards on Monday, plus photos of a couple of expressive Brexitometers. We also gave out many leaflets urging people to sign the petition to revoke Article 50.

One woman I spoke with worked in the health sector and told me that, in her hospital, patients were now dying because of staff shortages.

At the end of the stall I thanked our volunteers for their resilience and cheerfulness under fire. Special thanks to our resident musician, who lightened the mood with his lovely guitar music and generously gave half the proceeds of the CDs he sold to Devon for Europe. Thanks also to the local couple who invited us for a restoring cuppa and a hot-cross bun at their beautiful home. This refreshed the spirits after a gruelling day amidst traffic fumes and noise, in addition to toxic opinions.

Might it, could it be That despite May and Corbyn There's a People's vote?

3 April 2019: Plymouth College of Art

Today's stall outside Plymouth College of Art was short but productive despite bad weather. In just over an hour and a half we signed up 69 new supporters, most of them students.



We met a kind traffic warden! I had rolled up with the car, stopped on a yellow line and unloaded, then, as is the way with Devon for Europe volunteers, got talking with the others as they arrived. Soon there was a small knot of us all chatting away, with our backs to the car. Luckily I turned round at the right moment to see the warden, about to book me. "I'm just off," I said quickly, then explained who we were and what we were doing. Her response? "Don't you worry, you take your time, my dears."

We set up and almost immediately a hailstorm set in. This passed and we campaigned for another hour or so in raw and breezy conditions, with the odd gleam of sunshine. Though many people couldn't stop as they were late for lectures or on their way to work, there was plenty of interest and almost no abuse. Then the storm clouds massed again and large hailstones began bouncing on our table and soaking our leaflets, not to mention us. Umbrellas went up and we grouped round the table, backs to the storm. After a few minutes of this, we decided unanimously to repair to a nearby pub.

Thanks as ever to our valiant volunteers. Special thanks to the woman who came all the way from Brixham with her wheelchair – on her birthday!

6 April 2019: Landscope



“That is well said, but we must cultivate our garden,” says Candide, at the end of Voltaire’s eponymous novel. Given in answer to Dr Pangloss, surely fiction’s most idiotic philosopher, it’s the ultimate put-down of our tendency to theorize about the state of the world and an encouragement, instead, to act practically and locally – to leave our own little patch a better place and shut out the horrors that lie beyond.

Many of the gardeners visiting Hill House Nursery today seemed to agree with Candide. “I’ve come here to buy plants,” said one woman, “I don’t want to talk politics.” That meant a slow sign-up rate, especially at the start of the day, when footfall was low and reluctance to engage,

on the part of a largely older clientele, was most marked. But things picked up during the afternoon, when more and younger people, including families, came along. By staying the course until closing time at 5.00 pm, we managed to sign up 52 new supporters.

Occupying the former vicarage garden in the village of Landscope, near Totnes, Hill House Nursery is a joy to visit, especially at this time of year, when the spring shrubs are in full bloom. It’s not your standard issue commercial garden centre but rather a small family business, expertly run by owner Matt Hubbard, who continues the organic traditions started by his father Raymond. Not a drop of pesticide is spilled and the place is alive with birds.

Taking after the owner, the staff are kindness itself. An added bonus is the tearoom, which serves delicious cakes and simple hot meals.

Our volunteers could scarcely believe their luck, especially when the clouds broke up to bathe us in warm spring sunshine. Many walked round the gardens as well as the nursery, where several of us bought plants. And we all enjoyed relaxing breaks in the tearoom. One volunteer said it felt like “a reward for all the other stalls”.

Thanks to our 12 volunteers, especially the couple who came all the way over from Axminster. They brought with them an attractive innovation – a pinboard displaying relevant information. This is a great way to draw people in and we in the South Devon team should do something similar.

Our biggest thank you, however, must go to Matt and his colleagues, for generously hosting us. It was a fab day out for our team. Please may we come again?





Empire dementia

There's no short-term memory

They live in the past

“Brexit’s not going to happen. I’m not going to let it happen”

11 April 2019: Plymouth

One of the perks of doing Devon for Europe street stalls is that you get to see corners of Devon you wouldn’t otherwise visit.

Today’s stall in Plymouth was at the Royal William Yard, a former naval victualing yard built in the 1820s. The sheer scale is impressive – a reminder of Britain’s military

might when it ruled the waves and built an empire. And the setting is spectacular, at the southern tip of the city where the Tamar meets the sea. After the Second World War the yard fell into disuse, but in recent years it has been sensitively restored by a company called Urban Splash, with support from the EU.

Today it houses a great range of businesses offering everything from food markets to fitness classes. You can live there, in one of its plush apartments, or own a holiday home there. Best of all, you can eat and drink there, choosing from a variety of venues, most with a European flavour. Which is why I decided to try a stall there.

We took our humble place outside the monumental front gate. Because parking is inside, most visitors drive straight in, so footfall was limited. Nevertheless, there was quite a bit of coming and going and, by spreading out, we managed to catch most people as they rounded corners into or out of the large open space in front of our stall. On this beautiful sunny day, plenty were happy to stop and talk. By extending to three-and-a-half hours, we managed to sign up 67 new supporters.

A pasta dish at the Wildwood, just inside the main gate, was a great bonus. While there I signed up the chef and two of the waitresses. The service and food were excellent and we heartily recommend this place.

Some of the local inhabitants seemed to think Britain ought still to be building an empire. One resident called the police, who took a friendly interest in what we were doing and gave us a number to call in case of trouble. A passing motorist gave us a Nazi salute – but

it was unclear whether this was because he was a Nazi himself or because he thought we were. Predictably, we were called traitors, the vogue insult at present. One man stopped his car and wound down the window on the passenger side in order to tell me to f... off. Leaning across his obese female passenger, who closed her eyes in weary dismay, he jabbed with his finger and called me a “f...ing Nazi”. Pots and kettles came to mind.

All this grief was washed away by one of our last sign-ups of the day, a woman who thanked us profusely for being there. “Of course we can’t leave Europe,” she said. “Brexit’s not going to happen. I’m not going to let it happen!” She told me how, on the morning of 24 June 2016, she had felt the news of the vote “like a kick in the stomach”. Then came the anger, which just grows and grows, and the hardening resolve to see this dismal project off: “From Day 1, I said NO BREXIT!” I told her she sounded just like one of us! She rushed off to fetch her husband and the two of them completed the Brexitometer together. I urged her to fill in the online volunteers form and to come on a street stall as soon as she can. We need a few more like her!

A big thank you to our mid-week volunteers team. I hope you enjoyed the day as much as I did.

“No more Mr Nice Guy”

13 April 2019: Torquay

“Little by little, the egg will walk,” runs an Ethiopian proverb that, for me, perfectly captures the process of change. For a long while, on the surface of things nothing happens, but the conditions for change ripen slowly underneath. Then, when the moment is right, transformation occurs.

The first time we went to Torquay it was tough going and we signed up relatively few people. Then, when we were last there, in February, we noticed a quickening of interest, a new willingness to engage – and signed up 97 people in four hours. Today, we gained another 86 supporters in just three-and-a-half hours. Torquay mirrors the accelerating swing in public opinion that is happening across the country.

All of us had exciting conversations, often with people who were hostile or unsure of us to start with but gradually warmed to what we were saying. One woman I spoke with began by telling me that she “disliked immigrants” and the pressure they put on housing and other services, which was why she had voted Leave in 2016. I said I was sympathetic and understood her feelings. Then, when I pointed out that immigrants are ordinary people like her and me and that

they come to us ready educated, do useful jobs and pay their taxes, she slowly began to nod her head in agreement. She said – gently, a kind of wonder in her voice – that I had changed her mind, and signed up to join us there and then! I gave her a big hug and I think we both had tears in our eyes. Many people don’t really want to hate and are, or will be, grateful to us when we relieve them of that burden.

For others, however, hatred continues unabated and even intensifies. We had some sharp exchanges with people who were enraged. “Out means out,” yelled one man, wagging his finger. As usual we were labelled traitors and told we were undermining democracy. At odd moments a bearded old fellow appeared across the street and stood bawling at us, shaking his fist, red in the face. A couple of community police officers came over to check us out, having been phoned by a member of the public who had said we were sticking “Bollocks to Brexit” stickers on children. We

reassured them that we weren’t and, for a while after, they kept a watchful eye on us from their car, having given us to understand that they supported our cause.

We had been up and running for about an hour when a posse of UKIP supporters came marching down Union Street and took up a position opposite us, waving placards and yelling slogans. It was like two opposing armies, about to do battle. There were vehement exchanges, but for the most part these were good-natured and both sides were disciplined enough to avoid physical combat. This changed momentarily when one of them tried to seize our flag. Our volunteer resisted and slightly hurt a finger. She retired for a coffee break but, brave soul, soon returned to the “front line” as if nothing had happened.

A Bulgarian man stopped to listen to them and I admonished him, urging him to cross the road and talk with us instead. “No,” he said, “I want to hear both sides.” A few minutes later

he came over to our stall. “They don’t think about the young people,” he said, and signed up to join us.

Our 16 volunteers excelled themselves. All seemed exhilarated by a day that had been, by turns, tense and uplifting. Several said that, far from feeling daunted, they had enjoyed the clashes with Leavers. It was wonderful to have some young ones with us and to see them take their first cautious steps in engaging with the public.

Things are now moving fast in the direction we want them to go in, but we can expect trouble before we reach a resolution. Farage’s words, “No more Mr Nice Guy,” rang in my ears several times today. It’s a license for thuggery that he and his squeaky clean new party will of course disown, while encouraging the likes of the Ukipers and the English Defence League to do his dirty work for him. Watch out everyone, we are approaching the crisis.



1 May 2019: Exeter College

Our stall outside Exeter College today was a cheerful and cheering affair. We signed up 74 new supporters, most of them students.

The level of political awareness was incredibly high. Nearly all the 18-year-olds I spoke with knew about the EU elections, said they had already registered to vote and promised they would do so on 23 May. Many 17-year-olds expressed frustration at not being able to do so this time, the only consolation being that they could still register and would be ready to vote in the second referendum, once the time comes. One girl told me, with bright-eyed joy, that it was her 18th birthday today and that she could not wait to vote on 23 May!

Of course, we met the odd young leaver, odd being the operative word. One law student told me he wanted Brexit because life was “boring” and it would “shake things up”. He does not know what he is asking for, I thought. And I found myself thinking of my parents, who came through World War 2 and positively relished the “boredom” of the 1950s and early 60s. Is this dissatisfaction among the privileged young a version of paradise syndrome? Can paradise syndrome infect a whole nation?

I had a long conversation with a very politically aware young woman who asked me for materials that would help her in a long-running argument with her mother who, although she had voted

Remain in 2016, had now “gone over to the dark side”. I found it interesting that she viewed Leavers and Remainers much as I do – as “people of the dark” and “people of the light”. I gave her our EU facts leaflet and wished her luck in sorting out a family difficulty that she had not asked for and did not deserve.

One man from Plympton told me that his 12-year-old son is so distressed by Brexit that he “can’t talk about it any more”. All he can do is ask, “Why don’t they just stop it?”, a question his father, also distressed, cannot answer. The father signed up to join us and took away all three of our post-cards, one for each member of his family, to send to MP Sir Gary Streeter. I told him he had done something that would make his son proud of him and help assuage the grief and pain.

We gave out hundreds of leaflets about the EU elections, many on a separate leafleting exercise made possible by our plentiful support on the stall. One difficulty, on the stall, is finding the “elevator pitch” with which to introduce the complex topic of the EU elections. “Are you doing anything on 23 May?” seemed as good an opener as any.

Our 11 volunteers were cheerful as ever. Talking with young voters is a tonic to the soul and we should do more of it!



“Why don’t they just stop it?”

Jeremy Corbyn

Still manoeuvres for Brexit

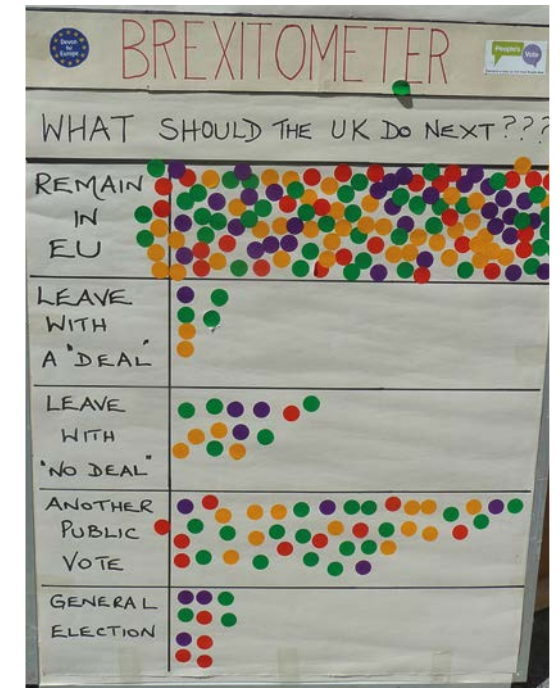
Stop deceiving us!

3 May 2019: Exeter

Today we carried out a pincer attack on central Exeter. A team from East Devon took our usual slot in Princesshay, while the South Devon group explored a new location on a wide chunk of pavement pleasantly shaded by trees, where Fore Street meets South Street. The idea was to show Exeter's people a strong presence in the city as we seek to bring out the vote for the European elections on 23 May.

As expected, we saw a different demographic at our new location. People seemed poorer, less well informed and not as willing to engage as at Princesshay. Despite this, we gained 67 new supporters and distributed hundreds of leaflets on the EU elections. I came across plenty of people who said they were aware of the elections and were keen to vote. University students, whom we had hoped to see at this end of town, were largely absent, perhaps because of exams. We had some robust conversations with Leavers, but abuse was virtually non-existent.

A big thank you to our 12 volunteers. We especially appreciate those who come long distances to stalls, of whom there were several on this occasion. Special thanks, too, to our musician for charming our ears and lifting the mood with his skilled guitar playing. His repertoire includes the Ode to Joy!





4 May 2019: Totnes

Three good omens occurred as I walked from the car park to the location of our stall in Totnes today. Wearing my EU beret, I had just got out of my car when a German woman came up to me and said, "I like your hat." She promised to come along to our stall later. Next, as I crossed the road, a mini-bus driver tooted his horn and gave me a thumbs-up. Then, as I had just greeted a volunteer who was waiting for me at the appointed place, a man came up to us and asked us for a badge. He was off to a "Brexit wedding" and wanted something to provoke discussion. Our volunteer gave him one that said "EU citizen" and I said, "Wear it with pride." "I will," he replied.

The omens proved right as our stall, held in dappled sunlight under leafing trees and regaled by music from our very own guitar player, soon developed something of a party atmosphere. Lively conversations occurred constantly and everyone seemed relaxed. Discussions round our two Brexitometers were fun as well as instructive, with majority opinion firmly favouring Revoke A50 and a People's Vote. We handed out a constant supply of brooches and stickers, plus loads of leaflets advising voters to come out on 23 May. Nearly everyone I spoke to promised to do so. The local elections have shown clearly that we can give the two main parties a bloody nose if we want to, and people

were fired up by the example and determined to do it again – even more so on the vital question of Europe.

One feature of Totnes is its characterful young people. I met Ruby, who had just turned 19 and was due to go to uni in Bath in September to study Art. She had not registered to vote, so I urged her to do so before 7 May. She said she would try, signed up to join us, completed our Brexitometer and joyfully took away leaflets and stickers.

I enjoyed some robust but good-humoured exchanges with Leavers. One young couple I met had mixed views, she staunchly Remain, he for Leave. We talked for a while, then he said: "I think we should invade France." I replied, "What, sort of a 1066 in reverse?" "That's right," he said. I turned to the woman: "What are you doing with this man? Time to push him over the white cliffs of Dover." She smiled, then shrugged. "We're married," she replied. We laughed together and they went on their way.

The damage to small businesses accumulates, slowly but surely. One of our volunteers signed up the owner of the local fish-and-chip shop. He told her he had voted Leave in 2016 but had now changed his mind. He said the price of the fish he buys, mainly from Norway and Iceland, had risen by 50% because of Brexit uncertainty. Many businesses like his, including restaurants throughout Devon, are clinging on to bare survival. A crash in the pound and they'll be finished.

In just three hours we signed up a stunning 124 new supporters, a superb performance by our wonderful team of 16 volunteers. It was great to be back in a town that always gives us such a warm welcome. We love you, Totnes!



“You have given me much food for thought”

11 May 2019: Ashburton

The sun shone on us in Ashburton today and we found the town’s people largely in a sunny and supportive mood. During an enjoyable stall that passed off with little abuse, we signed up 66 new supporters.

More and more people seem to grasp that Brexit isn’t any longer, if it ever was, a matter of opinion but one of right and wrong. One woman I spoke with depicted it as a struggle between the dark and the light, a metaphor I come across increasingly. Ultimately, beyond its economic, social and political implications, Brexit is a spiritual issue. For those who tell me that they are confused and “don’t know what to think,” I find a simple question can sometimes work: “Are you a ‘walls’ person or a ‘bridges’

person?” I accompany this with gestures – putting my arms up to hide my face and eyes so as to indicate the isolation implied by walls, then making eye contact and extending a hand when putting across the bridges idea. Almost everyone answers “bridges”, so I then say, “It’s the same for our country: we should build bridges to our friends and neighbours in Europe, not erect walls against them.”

One of our volunteers had a long conversation with a woman who, at the end of it, said, “You have given me much food for thought” – a sign that she was about to cross over from the dark to the light. So many of our conversations do not yield an immediate result, but we sow the seeds and, in time, these germinate.



Tom Wood, of “Antiques and Coins” fame (7 St Lawrence Lane), came by to wish us well. He is a big supporter, displaying our leaflets and posters in his tiny shop. We also enjoyed a brief visit by Andy Williamson, local Green Party candidate in two general elections. A passing van driver tooted his support and called “Keep up the good work”.

We do as much as we can to counter the lies, but it remains a worry that so many are gullible. One of our volunteers told me that two people had independently brought up their concerns about the Lisbon treaty, because of a piece peddling lies about it that they had come across online. This had already come up in Plymouth a fortnight ago. Our volunteer stressed, as we all do, that this posting is fake news, but many will read it and believe it.

The Brexitometer remains a great tool for engaging people in dialogue. Plenty of young families had a go and we developed a fine message for local MP Mel Stride, who will also receive a clutch of post-cards asking him to back a People’s Vote.

We distributed plenty of leaflets urging people to come out and vote in the European Parliament elections on 23 May. Several of us encouraged recipients not only to vote themselves but to find three friends who also would, and to ask each of these three to find three more, and so on – like a pyramid scheme. It remains to be seen how successful this will be, but plenty said they would give it a go.

Several people asked us which way they should vote. I replied with the official Devon for Europe “line”, which is that, under electoral law, we are not permitted to advise on this. One woman, accompanied by her husband, asked me to name the Remain parties and I said that, sadly, I was not at liberty to do so. “The Lib Dems, the Greens, and Change UK,” the husband chipped in helpfully. “You might say so, but I couldn’t possibly comment,” I replied, smiling with pleasure at the opportunity to quote Francis Urquhart.

Our 14 volunteers enjoyed the spring air and the lightness of today’s campaigning. After the stall, several of us enjoyed a social at North Street’s delightful tearoom.

Good day, sun shine.



15 May 2019: Plymouth

We enjoyed plenty of good conversations in Plymouth today. In the warm spring sunshine, people were prepared to stop despite its being a working day.

Awareness of the EU elections on 23 May was high. Many said they would come out to vote and persuade three others to do so too. People were worried that Nigel Farage's new Brexit party would sweep the board, but the Remain parties' messages seem to be coming across strongly as well. Newton's third law comes to mind: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In other words, judging by what I hear on the streets, "the Resistance" will perform well on 23 May, because so many are alarmed and disgusted by Farage.

We signed up 71 supporters in three hours. Several had voted Leave in 2016, including one woman who had changed her mind because the government "couldn't organize the proverbial". How many Leavers understand that Brexit is failing not just because it has been incompetently pursued – which it has, no doubt about that – but also because it's inherently an undeliverable project? I did point out to one unrepentant Leaver that all forms of Brexit lead to a net loss of sovereignty, not a gain – but he wouldn't have it.

I always find it strange when the far left wants the same thing as the far right. One Leaver we spoke to, a hard-left Corbynist/Bennite, insisted the EU wouldn't allow us to renationalize the railways, despite our citing evidence to the contrary.

What to do about "leaches"? These are people who, while not being aggressive or abusive, take up huge amounts of our volunteers' time in conversations that go nowhere: they will not sign up, will not support us in any way. We had one of these in Totnes, and another today – an unreformed anarchist with whom one of our volunteers got into a deep and very long discussion. The volunteer said afterwards that he "had no idea" how long he had spoken with him.

And what to do about Jehovah's witnesses? We come across these on stalls constantly. All show the same tell-tale sign, a refusal to engage with politics because "only God" can sort out the mess made by man. I find this a deeply flawed argument on several grounds, but no matter how many objections I come up with, these people are immovable!

One of my conversations took an unexpected turn. A Leaver who started as very indignant mellowed when we discovered a common interest in music. We talked for some minutes about the European classical tradition and its



transformative power, agreeing that this was indeed the gateway to a better world. I told him that my wife and I always make an annual trip to the Proms. I also told him about Daniel Barenboim's 2017 address to the Proms audience, warning against the dangers of nationalism and the isolation it implies. If we come out of EU air-travel arrangements for musicians and their instruments, it will make inviting European orchestras expensive and complicated. We shook hands and wished each other many more happy years of listening. Whether I made him re-think his views I cannot say, but there's an outside chance I did.

Thank you to our 10 volunteers, who made a great team, as always.

A cancerous blight The hostile closed mindedness Consuming Leavers

"Foreigners come into our country
and go straight to the front of the queue"

18 May 2019: Paignton

Shabby but not chic, Paignton is a place of quiet English despair. Its cheap and cheerful seaside experience has all the traditional props, including a pier decked out with flags, but there's no denying it lacks the glamour and charm of neighbouring Torquay and Brixham. Several of the hotels along its once prosperous sea-front are boarded up or being demolished.

This is Tory heartland – and Brexit heartland too. We heard lots of disbelief in the gathering national crisis. Older couples, sauntering with their grandchildren, gave airy assertions that "it will be all right" if we crash out without a deal. After all, we got through two world wars. And we could go back to the way

we were in the 1970s. (Do they know that nostalgia is an indicator of fascism?)

One woman, accompanied by her two children, told me that her house had been flooded by a winter storm and they had had to move to a B&B. "We got no help from the government," she said, then claimed that "foreigners come into our country and go straight to the front of the queue". This was why she had voted Leave and she wasn't going to change her mind.

In such places we fight a war of attrition, coming back time and again to show staying power, even if we don't gain much ground. Today we got 34 sign-ups in three-and-a-

half hours, each hard won in the face of the prevailing indifference. There was no abuse, just ignorance as people persist in dreaming the Brexit dream. Our Brexitometer showed that some still believe in the mythical benefits to the NHS, the economy and the environment.

The sea-front was quiet at first, but footfall increased in the early afternoon and we started to enjoy a few more lively conversations. One woman said that the thought of Boris Johnson becoming PM was "a nightmare". A man, clearly re-thinking his 2016 vote to leave, acknowledged that "we stand to lose a lot". It was encouraging to meet a number of people whose opinions were "on the turn" in this way.

Another bright spot was our reception by Amanda Hilton, owner-manager of Lollipops and Roses, the kiosk behind our stall. Amanda welcomed our presence, approved of what we were doing, signed up to join us, and posted us on her Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Lollipopsandroses1/>.

[com/Lollipopsandroses1/](https://www.facebook.com/Lollipopsandroses1/). We loved her shop, which we encourage others to visit.

I ended up in a boisterous set-to with a military man, who challenged me on the amount I had travelled – never a wise move. He looked perplexed as I reeled off about 20 African and Asian countries, including Syria before it went mad. We both kept our tempers and I invited him to join us for a snack after we had packed up, but he declined as his small boy, bored with politics, had nodded off in his arms.

A big thank you to our loyal and persistent volunteers, who keep on coming to these Brexit strongholds, however disheartening. There is a value in continuing to show our faces there, as it tells the opposition we're not going away. One day our efforts will be rewarded.

After we had packed up a few of us repaired to the trad fish-and-chippy on the pier, where we drank in the atmosphere while sharing a basket of chips. It was all very English.



Machiavelli Would be very proud today Of Leadsom and May

22 May 2019, The Sun

Andrea Leadsom's stinging resignation to Theresa May was revenge for defeat in 2016 leadership battle



22 May 2019: Totnes

Good things come to Devon for Europe stall volunteers. Today we were given free ice cream!

[Delphini's Gelato](#), at 58 High Street in Totnes, is one of those expert small businesses for which the town is famous. Made on the premises, the ice cream is authentically Italian and all that you might expect in terms of taste and freshness, but the owner-manager, Johan, is Dutch. Johan has lived in Britain since 2010 and started his Totnes business in 2017. In three weeks from now he marries Cassie, a

Totnes girl whom he describes as “the most beautiful in the world”.

When one of our local volunteers came down the street delivering leaflets, he gave her a message to take back to us: a free ice cream to all our volunteers, provided we came one at a time and ate it standing outside his premises. Several of us eagerly took up his offer, including me. Our volunteer held the camera while Johan and I filmed an impromptu promo vid for both our enterprises: <https://www.facebook.com/delphinisgelato>

Johan is a keen DfE supporter, displays our leaflets and cards, and made an urgent plea to voters to come out and vote for a pro-EU party on EU election day, tomorrow!

We wish Johan, his fiancée and his pro-EU business every success and happiness in the years to come. His is the kind of enterprise that Totnes needs – and to lose him to the racist demagogues, crooks and thugs that threaten to take over our country is unthinkable.

Today was the last day of campaigning before the elections. We made a big effort to distribute our remaining leaflets, about 500 in all, urging people to come out and vote. One of our volunteers went up and down



both sides of Fore Street and reported that nearly all shops had accepted leaflets and that several cafés were putting them on their tables for customers to see. He said it was the perfect antidote to the apathy and ill will we had seen in Paignton a few days previously. Other volunteers covered other parts of town, including the Plains, and I took the 50 or so leaflets we had left at the end to the Almond Thief in Dartington, to Buckfastleigh town centre, and to my neighbour, our local dairy farmer in Scoriton.

The leaflets were well received, with many saying they would come out to vote themselves and would find others to do likewise. One couple, on holiday from Yorkshire, said they would catch an early train tomorrow in order to get back in time to vote. I believe we will see a huge pro-EU turnout that will deliver a shock to the main parties and force them to acknowledge that the people have changed their minds on Brexit.

The town was quiet to start with but the pace quickened as the day wore on. In four-and-a-half hours we secured 82 sign-ups, an excellent result for a week-day. A big thank you to our 12 hard-working volunteers. I can hardly wait to see whether the election results will reflect the work of teams like ours, who have laboured up and down the country these past few days. A brilliant effort by all involved.

*Waah! I have to go
Before I got rid of all
EU nationals*

24 May 2019, BBC News

**Theresa May quits:
UK set for new PM
by end of July**



25 May 2019: Brixham

Brixham was in festive mood today. It was the opening day of the annual Brixfest, a family-friendly event featuring bands, stalls and the famous dragon boat race.

Knowing parking would be problematic and fearing competition from other stallholders, we assembled early to stake out our ground, a perfect spot on the Old Harbour quayside, a few yards from the festival proper. The quayside was quiet at first but filled up as the festival got under way.

Despite the crowds sign-ups were slow, as many people were on holiday and didn't want to engage. There was some disaffection with the fact that we were there and a few muttered accusations of treachery, but little aggressive abuse.

After an hour or so of reasonably brisk business, especially with our two Brexitometers, along came Sandra Flowers, a keen Devon for Europe supporter who is also a member of the Brixfest organizing committee. Could we move a bit further away from the festival, which was supposed to be non-political? We'd have been in our rights to stay where we were, but the request was so charmingly made that it seemed churlish to refuse. So we upped stumps and shifted to the other side of the William of Orange statue. This was a less conducive spot

with a narrower pavement which made for congestion, making people relatively unwilling to stop. But I think it was right to move there, as we need to keep in with local people even at some cost to stall effectiveness.

In four hours of campaigning we gained 53 sign-ups – 34 Devonians and 19 visitors from elsewhere. Two of the non-Devonians were French yachtsmen who had sailed over from Brittany and were interested to learn of the growing resistance to Brexit.

In 2011, a major project to regenerate the port of Brixham was completed, with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Nowhere did I see any acknowledgement of this. Indeed, the plaque on the quayside, giving a brief history of the harbour's development, conspicuously fails to mention it. One man who signed up to join us told me that Brixham's fishermen "all voted Leave" and that "they don't know why". The absence of any public expression of gratitude for the support the EU provides to towns such as Brixham is one of the factors that explain Brexit.

Many thanks to our eight heroic volunteers, who toiled long hours under the sun. Our musician contributed admirably to the festive atmosphere with his expert guitar playing.

1 June 2019: Plymouth

One thing about doing street stalls is the nice surprises you get.

I wasn't looking forward to our return to Plymouth's Mutley Plain. The first time we were there, around six months ago, I had my beret knocked off and our flag-waver and I were sworn at and shouted at, the main accusation being that we must be from "f***ing Totnes"!

Today's stall, at exactly the same spot, had a completely different atmosphere. Many stopped to engage and we all enjoyed interesting conversations. One of mine was with a retired NHS nurse who had voted Leave in 2016 but was very open to dialogue. Her main issue was democracy and the need to respect the 2016 referendum result. When I explained how flawed this was, she seemed ready to entertain the idea of a People's

Vote, having at first rejected it. We touched on a range of other issues, including staff losses in the NHS. In all cases she proved a great listener, very open to others' points of view. I ended up shaking her by the hand and thanking her for our exchanges. She took away our Facts leaflet and I have a feeling it won't be long before we have another convert to our cause.

Leavers who are open to reason and dialogue, while not a new phenomenon, make a welcome change from the usual blanket rejection.

During a fascinating morning's campaigning we signed up 93 new supporters, a remarkable score for what I had thought of as a "difficult" location. Is it too early to conclude that the long, slow shift in public opinion is starting to accelerate?



"Now we have decent food in this country; we didn't have that in 1971"

7 June 2019: Bovey Craft Festival

"I feel European," says Paul Brealey, in simple explanation of why he wants our country to stay in the EU.

Paul puts his finger on a fundamental difference between Leavers and Remainers. It's feelings, not facts, that determined how people voted in 2016. And those feelings are deeply rooted in our sense of identity. Leavers tend to cling to a single identity to the exclusion of others – "I'm English" – while Remainers are more likely to embrace a multi-layered identity – "I'm Devonian, British and European". Such people often tell us that their European identity makes them feel more British, not less. Why? Because healthy people define themselves through their relations

with others. No man is an island entire unto himself. And no country should be either. To adapt the Sufi saying: if Britain wishes to travel towards itself, it must go through the other.

Is that all a bit too snow-flakey? Then let's get back to the so-called "real" world. Practical businessman that he is, Paul cites the change in our eating habits as the best possible reason for remaining in Europe. "Now we have decent food in this country; we didn't have that in 1971," he says.

He should know. Paul runs a company called Lemon Jelli Events, based in Bovey Tracey. "Street food extraordinaire," is the company's strapline. He and his staff travel up and down



the county in their distinctive retro vans, making and serving their delicious crêpes and waffles at weddings, festivals and other events. Besides the food, there's the usual range of barista-made coffees and other hot drinks. There's even a mobile cocktail bar! Find out more at www.lemonjellievents.co.uk

We met Paul on Day 1 of our 3-day stall at the Bovey Craft Festival, when he came over and invited us all to drop by his van for free drinks as a thank you for what we are doing. It was a generous offer – one we fully intend to take up, on Day 2.

The festival itself (<https://www.craftfestival.co.uk>) is a joy, well worth visiting. My favourite, among hundreds of exhibits, was a start-up called Solid Wool. Based in Buckfastleigh, owners Hannah and Justin Floyd have found new ways of adding value to the coarse wool produced from upland sheep, which has lost its market with the decline of the carpet industry. Among other things, they make a very decent looking kitchen chair!

Several of us could have done with a sit-down on one of these. We were on our feet, talking with members of the public round and about our stall, from the moment we set up, at mid-day, until we stopped, at 4.00 pm. During that time we gained an amazing 107 new joiners. A big thank you to our team of seven volunteers for this spectacular result.

We ran two Brexitometers, one our "traditional" model and the other a new tool, the "Moodometer", developed by our campaign manager. While our traditional model asks people what they think about Brexit, the Moodometer asks them how they feel about it.

If, as our exchanges with Paul suggest, feelings are paramount in determining the future of our country, one look at the Moodometer results will tell you that Brexit is dead in the water.

We know this; when will our politicians get it?



My country lurches Freefalling into chaos It's Cameron's fault

"I've never seen such a mess in all my life.
Britain is a laughing stock in Europe"

8 June 2019: Bovey Craft Festival

"I'll hold the dragon-fly for you," I found myself saying to one woman – and immediately thought: I've never in my life before said anything quite so peculiar! It's one of the intriguing new experiences that Brexit has brought me.

The woman had walked across the grass to our stall from the Bovey Craft Festival, where she had bought the handsome model insect, woven from willow. I had offered to hold it for her while she filled out our sign-up card.

This was one of a stunning 193 people who joined Devon for Europe during a very exciting Day 2 of campaigning at the festival. Our stall, on the banks of the River Bovey in Mill Marsh Park, was a hive of lively conversations with people sympathetic to our cause, many of them young families. Most expressed their

dismay at the collapse of our political system and their fear that worse was to come.

Our two Brexitometers, one on what people think about Brexit and the other on what they feel about it, again attracted a lot of attention and send a strong message to local MP Mel Stride. Wake up, Mel: the people have changed their minds!

This was a day of sharp contrasts – one moment sunny and warm, the next blustery, with a squall of rain accompanied by a sudden dive in temperature. We noted a marked weather effect on our sign-up rate: when the sun was shining, people were willing to stop and talk; when the rain set in, they hurried on. Our new gazebo came into its own, providing a welcome shelter to huddle under when the squalls came.



We took turns to visit the festival. During mine, I enjoyed a free hot chocolate at Lemon Jelli Events, kindly offered by owner Paul Brealey the day before.

I also met Croatian-born Maria Redhead, who came to Britain in 1972 and fell in love with an Englishman. Today she was a garlanded volunteer in the Out of the Woods tent, where they celebrate all things sylvan. “I’ve never seen such a mess in all my life,” Maria told me. “Britain is a laughing stock in Europe. I have friends in Italy, France, Croatia; they all



ask me ‘What is happening in Britain?’ Our reputation for moderation and good sense is in tatters.”

Maria has taken British citizenship, but her husband is now saying he will apply to become Croatian. I applauded his move and hung my head in shame at what our country has become.

Our 13 volunteers remained good humoured come rain or shine. My thanks to them all for the day’s stunning achievement, the product of excellent teamwork. It is wonderful to see friendships, as well as working relationships, between them take shape. A special welcome to Caroline Voaden, back with us after her successful campaign to become an MEP. Congratulations, Caroline!

Quote of the day came from our youngest volunteer, wise beyond her 19 years: “I’ve studied lots of history; I don’t want to live it.”

We know the feeling.

9 June 2019: Bovey Craft Festival

“Keep the faith,” said one man, patting me on the back as he passed.

He hadn’t offered any practical help, but his encouragement reinforced my already positive feelings about today – the third of our rolling 3-day stall at the Bovey Craft Festival.

For me, the theme of the day was hope. It was about our ability to inspire hope in others, giving them a belief that this whole mess will eventually come right. And it was about others giving us hope, by thanking us for what we were doing, by saluting our courage and perseverance, by pledging their support.

Many commented on the growing madness of the Tories, on the fact that would-be successors to Mrs May are promising what will in effect be a coup – the proroguing of Parliament in order

to force a no-deal exit on us. Time and again I found myself saying to people: “We are going to stop this. Britain is better than this.” Several times I referred to the placard I saw on our last London march, the one that said, “Brexit is the bloody, messy birth of a European Britain.” The darkest hour truly does come before dawn – and we are entering that hour now. But the dawn will surely follow. We will emerge from this trauma a different country – more knowledgeable about Europe, more aware of why we must belong, more willing to engage as an equal partner instead of seeking to dominate.

Thanks to the early arrival of our volunteers we were able to set up in good time, opening to the public at 10.30 am. As the sun shone we got off to a cracking start, signing up 54 new joiners in under two hours. People crowded round our stall

– so much so that we were all taken up with enquiries close to the tables and did not need to roam further afield to pull people in. Then, at 12.20 pm, the skies darkened and the rain came down. Abruptly, our sign-up rate fell away, though a few brave souls still came over as we huddled under the gazebo. When the shower passed, we were immediately besieged again.

This pattern was repeated throughout the afternoon – and every time it was the same: as soon as the rain stopped, people re-engaged, asking us questions, seeking reassurance. “Will our politicians ever see sense?” asked one. Another decried the leadership vacuum: there was no vision, just a craven response to the “will of the people” as expressed three years ago. A third questioned the air-time given to Farage instead of Veterans for Europe. And a fourth, a military man, told me he thought Brexit a terrible idea, as it would undo all the good work done over the past decades to bring Europeans together.

I met a delightful Anglo-German couple with six children. The parents eagerly signed up to join us and took away our post-cards, including several copies of the “Don’t trash my future” one, which they said their children would mail to local MP Mel Stride. We talked

about the Grundgesetz – Germany’s post-war written constitution – and how this underpins the behaviour of the country’s politicians. And then about the need for a reform agenda here after Brexit has been beaten. This must include a written constitution, with clear rules governing, inter alia, the conduct of referendums and the interpretation of their results. Some argue that Britain must experience the disgrace and humiliation suffered by Germany in 1945 before we can come to our senses. I said simply that I hoped and believed it would not come to that, that the people of Britain are already waking up.

By the end of the day we had signed up 168 new supporters. Given the conditions, this was a terrific performance by our 10 volunteers, who stayed cheerful and kept working through rain and shine. Today’s total comes on top of 193 on Saturday and 108 on Friday, making a grand total of 469 new supporters for our 3-day effort.

Sign-up card by sign-up card, we are building a mass movement. Equally important, we are building and sustaining hope in the Remain community and contributing to the change in public opinion we see more clearly with each passing day. All who took part can take great pride in this magnificent achievement.



“Brexit is the bloody, messy birth of a European Britain”



“Why should I worry?”

12 June 2019: Plymouth, City College

EU-themed cup cakes were the high point of today’s street stall outside Plymouth’s City College. Made by one of our volunteers, they were delicious and much enjoyed by the rest of the team. Thank you!

Otherwise, this was a somewhat frustrating stall. Footfall was low outside the visitors’ entrance, where we set up. Most students went to and fro within the college grounds, which we could not enter as we weren’t official visitors. All we could do was hail them from a distance and beckon them to come over. Some gathered on a patch of lawn beside the boundary wall, but we were on a lower level on the other side, so had to “talk up” to them, awkwardly. The spot we were at, beneath a tree outside the gate, turned out to be near the smokers’ corner, but few were willing to stub out their cigarettes to come over and talk with us.

Worryingly, the students’ level of awareness of Brexit’s implications was very low. Worse still, they seemed indifferent to their fate. “I don’t mind,” “Why should I worry?” and “It’s going to happen anyway” were typical responses. Few either knew or cared about the loss of their rights

to freedom of movement and the effects of this on jobs. Even fewer knew that the EU is a major donor to the college, despite the plaque displayed to public view at the enquiries desk.

Our response was to dish out Facts and DfE leaflets as best we could, giving multiple copies to the few takers and asking them to tell their friends. One girl hesitated to take leaflets, saying that her parents had voted Leave and she was afraid of what they would say when they found out she had joined us. It was galling to feel that this shy young person had to hide her opinions from the very adults who should be supporting her.

In two-and-a-half hours we signed up 38 new joiners, mostly students but also some staff. This is a low total compared to recent stalls at Exeter College or Plymouth College of Art.

On the up side, awareness outside the college, among passing motorists, seemed high. We got lots of appreciative toots in response to our Toot to Stop Brexit sign.

Many thanks to our six volunteers. Our cup-cake cook said the blue on her cakes wasn’t as dark as she wanted. We all hope she’ll have another go!

Oh how the death throes Of an Empire in the head Kick us black and blue



“Dartmouth is full of angry, embittered old men”

15 June 2019: Dartmouth

Dartmouth’s beauty is beguiling, but the place itself is a stranger to 21st century Britain, locked in a time warp, cut off from reality.

You’d think its sea-faring tradition would make it outward looking. But on the land side the town is physically isolated, stuck out on a limb. And the isolation seems to have its psychological counterpart: there’s an elderly moneyed class that cares nothing for the harm done to others by Brexit; and there are armed forces personnel who unthinkingly embrace a shallow nationalism, never having seen action themselves.

“We want out, that’s what we voted for,” said one angry old fellow. Another, offered our Facts leaflet, told me he cared nothing for the facts. A third shook his finger and called me a “f***ing traitor”, spluttering with rage. I should be put to death, apparently. Nearly all of us experienced variations on this theme at one point or other. “Dartmouth is full of angry, embittered old men,” said one of our volunteers.

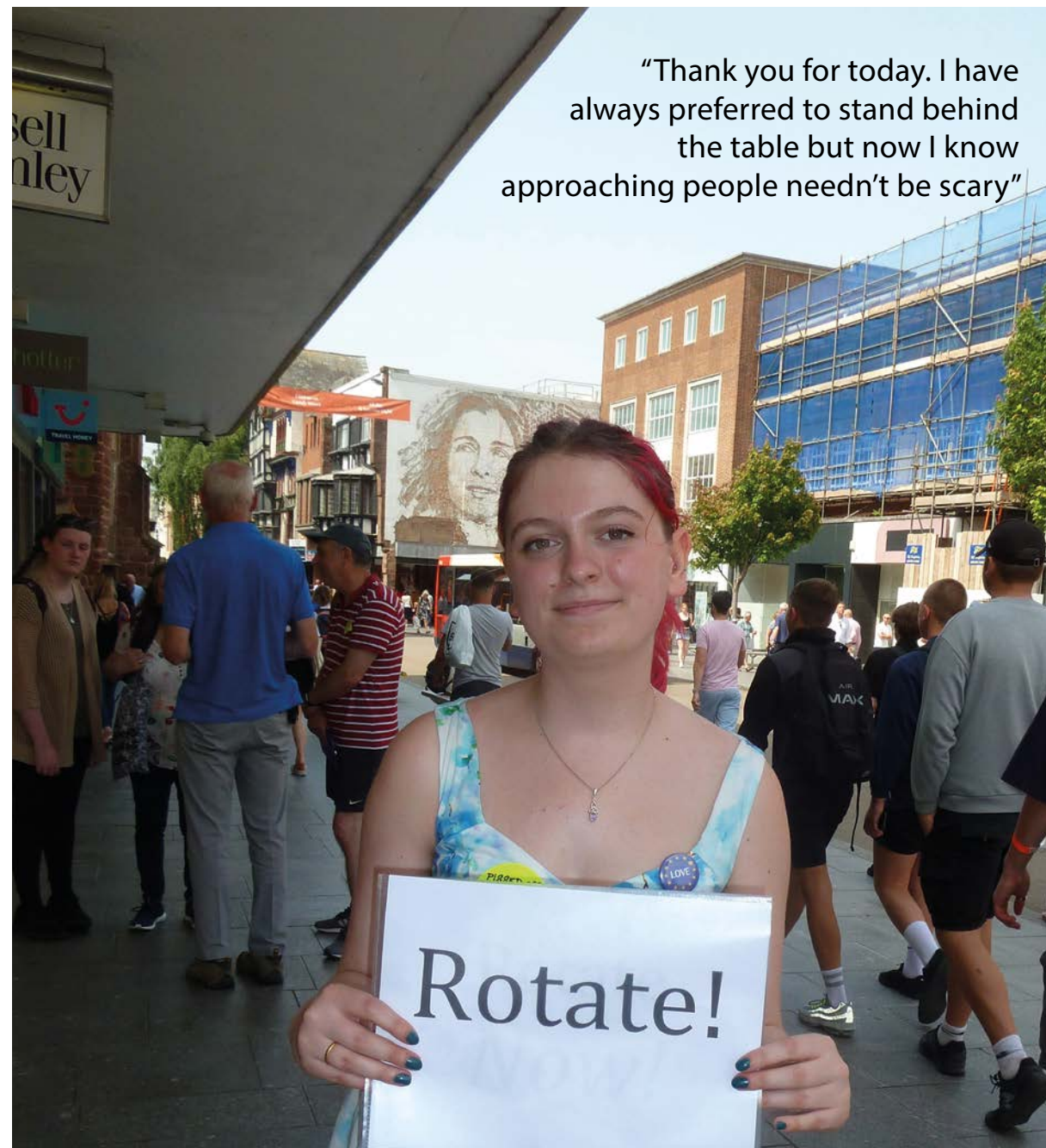
And yet it wasn’t as bad as the last time we were there, some nine months ago. On that occasion one of our volunteers “retired hurt”, having been savaged by five

successive bigots, one after the other. This time opinion seemed to have shifted, if only a little. There was more interest in our stall. People had a go at our two Brexitometers or took away leaflets, even if they didn’t sign up on the spot.

In three hours we gained 78 new supporters, a good score considering the modest footfall. Nearly half of these were visitors, mainly from York and Cardiff. Dartmouth remains a popular tourist destination, precisely because of the time warp.

The divisiveness of Brexit was all too evident. One older woman who joined us said, “I’ve lost my family.” Her children and their partners had moved to a village near Venice to get away from Brexit. That’s a keenly felt personal loss to her, but it’s also a loss to our country – of skills and labour, as well as tax revenues now paid to a foreign exchequer.

Early rain gave way to sun and our volunteers basked in it, appreciating the beauty of the place while never quite able to let down their guard. We’ll be back, to shift the town another couple of inches along the road to redemption.



29 June 2019: Exeter (training stall)

Today we ran a training stall for supporters who were either brand new to street stalls or who had been on a few but wanted to improve their skills. We held the stall at one of our usual haunts – Exeter’s Princesshay, where we’ve enjoyed a favourable reception in the past.

The emphasis was on approaching members of the public as a “roamer” – moving out beyond the safety of the stall tables to initiate conversations with passers-by. This is something many of us have found difficult at first and had been identified as the main area where we needed to build beginners’ confidence. But trainees could also spend time in the “anchor” position behind the tables, where the public come to us and are usually supportive, and on the Brexitometers, which allow further opportunities for interaction with the public.

We took a “learning by doing” approach. Two batches of trainees, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, shadowed our experienced campaigners and were rotated among them at 20-minute intervals. Our idea was to expose the trainees to a range of campaigning styles rather than specifying that any one style is “best”. The trainees were encouraged to try starting conversations for themselves, so that they would begin to

“find their voice”. What is that crucial opening line – the one that both suits the individual trainee and is most likely to gain a passer-by’s sympathetic attention?

Although trainers and trainees were formally differentiated, the trainees were invited to challenge a trainer if they thought that he or she could have handled something, or someone, better. The idea was that we should all learn from each other.

The stall met its two aims amazingly well. Most trainees quickly picked up the basics and, in some cases, moved swiftly from shadowing to “freelancing” – engaging with the public by themselves. Some visibly gained in confidence in just a few minutes of practice. I had expected a trade-off between the campaigning and training objectives, with reduced sign-ups as a result. But this was far from the case: during a long day, from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, we signed up 315 new supporters, a phenomenal result.

One trainee wrote afterwards: “Thank you for today, everyone, especially the people I shadowed... I have always preferred to stand behind the table but now I know approaching people needn’t be scary.”

One thing that works, for me at least, is to turn the roamer’s interaction with the

public into street theatre: to act out the part, keeping an outer shell or shield in place behind which the real you takes shelter. That way insults and injuries bounce off, doing you no harm. This is closely akin to the “fake it till you make it” approach advocated by business advisers and life coaches. You expand your comfort zone by imitating the feelings of confidence and optimism you wish to acquire – until you acquire them. You can even practise bodily postures that project confidence.

Thank you to our trainees for a wonderful debut. We hope you enjoyed the day and will come back for more. A huge thank you also to our training team, who toiled long

and hard under the sun. Special thanks to our youngest volunteer for the small touches of kindness that made our day go better – replenishing our water bottles, making sure we used sun-tan lotion, donating fudge, muffins and raspberries. And also for wielding that “Rotate” sign with aplomb! Lastly, thanks to the three “regular” volunteers who came at midday to tide us over the lunch hour, while our trainers took a well earned break in preparation for the afternoon shift.

The teamwork on this stall was brilliant! Practice makes perfect – and this was as near perfect as we are likely to get.



2 July 2019, BBC News

Brexit Party MEPs turn backs in EU Parliament

What circus is this?
All parliament is a stage
And the clowns direct

“Families have been torn apart”

4 July 2019: Totnes

Under the plane trees in sunny Totnes today we signed up 105 new supporters, a record result for a mid-week stall. We were helped by fine weather and plenty of footfall. And our hard-working team kept going through the lunch hour to maximize the total.

The “Boris factor” was much in evidence. People are sceptical of his ability to succeed where Mrs May failed. Several said that, from a Remainer’s point of view, Mr Johnson is the best choice for PM because he will mess things up so badly that Brexit will soon be a

lost cause. Others expressed their disgust at the antics of Mr Farage and the Brexit “Party” MEPs in the European Parliament yesterday.

Both men, Johnson and Farage, are polarizing public opinion as never before. But more and more people are recoiling from the extremism they represent. Faced with a choice between fascism and isolation on the one hand, and moderation and engagement on the other, they are, I believe, increasingly choosing the latter. We have turned the corner!

We gave out hundreds of leaflets on the coach trips to London for our next big march on 20 July. Although many said they wouldn’t be able to go themselves, they were easily persuaded to take a leaflet for family members or friends. There was also keen interest in sponsoring coach tickets for students and others who’d like to go but find the cost too high. Totnes’s finest ice cream maker, Johan, popped by and sponsored one of our volunteers there and then. “I want to make it personal,” he said.

The scars of Brexit will be slow to heal. I met one man who was distraught. “Families have been torn apart,” he said, his own included. He told me that he admired Corbyn’s attempt

to bridge the two sides, but we agreed it was mission impossible – there is no middle ground. I consoled him only a little with the thought that time will eventually heal these differences and knit the country together again. In the short term, the hurt is likely to get worse, because one side or other is going to be disappointed.

A German living in Bridgtown told me that he had thought of this country as his home for 18 years before the 2016 vote. “Since then,” he said, “I am not so sure.” The racism is seldom blatant, but there is a subtle alienation, a *Verfremdung*, in the air.

Our loyal and committed volunteers made a great team, as ever. Congratulations to the two who came fresh from our training stall in Exeter last Saturday, who took to it as if they were old hands. One family, spanning three generations, were charming visitors to the stall and provided us with our youngest ever stall assistant. Thanks should also go to a busker, well known around Devon, who regaled us with a delightful medley of comic songs, including Noel Coward’s “Bad times are just around the corner”.

“In Tunbridge Wells you can hear the yells of woe-begone bourgeoisie.” Totnes will pull through, though – it’s such a cheerful place.



Dear Mr Corbyn As Opposition Leader Fucking *do* something!

6 July 2019: Exeter Craft Festival

"Save your country from fascism, join Devon for Europe," I say in a light, bantering tone, as I cavort in front of our stall, motioning people towards it. Most people smile and walk on; a few look irritated and walk on; occasionally someone stops.

One man who stopped today said, "Fascism? Do you really think so? Surely, you're exaggerating." I paused, then answered, "Yes, I do think so." And it made me realize that, whereas I used to avoid the F-word three years ago and might have said it half

in jest two years ago, I now say it with the utmost seriousness – while still keeping the tone light of course. We talked for a while about the precursors of fascism, particularly nostalgia, and about the complacency that lets fascism in: "Oh, it couldn't happen here". I mentioned Gli Indifferenti, Alberto Moravia's fine first novel, published in 1929, which explores bourgeois decadence and the moral vacuum that both engenders and reflects fascism. And we talked about today's signs and symbols, as we edge our way along

the road to neofascism and are softened up for it – specifically the antics of Mr Farage and his Brexit "Party" MEPs in the European Parliament. It's less than 48 hours since they turned their backs on the EU's supranational anthem, the Ode to Joy, in a shocking repeat of the disrespect shown by Hitler and the blackshirts to the speaker of the Reichstag in 1926 Berlin. Yet the fuss has all but died down, the shock has evaporated. We shrug: it's just one more step in the normalization of what should seem horribly abnormal, but doesn't.

It seems extraordinary to write these words, here in what is still the United Kingdom, in July 2019. But I have to write them. I keep wanting to yell at people, "Wake up!"

I didn't yell at this man, because our conversation was enriching for both sides – and he took away our Facts leaflet and said he would give the matter more thought. But there were many others I wanted to yell at.

It was the second day of our 3-day presence at the Exeter Craft Festival. In the torrid conditions of the pedestrian walkway where we held our stall, people seemed sleepy, apathetic and..., yes, indifferent. The stall lacked the buzz of yesterday's and indeed the entire festival seemed becalmed.

Despite this, we signed up 203 new supporters, not quite as many as yesterday but still a good total. And we gave out hundreds of leaflets about our coaches to London for the next big demo on 20 July. Many said they couldn't go, would be on holiday, had friends or family staying and wouldn't bestir themselves. Indifference again! If people really knew what was being done to our country, they would surely drop everything to be there...

Tomorrow is another day. What horrors will it bring? Can we wake up from the nightmare?



Hey! Politicians! Remember us? The people? No? Didn't think so

"We were lied to. It's such a mess"

7 July 2019: Exeter Craft Festival

Well, I have to eat my words of yesterday: people aren't so indifferent to our country's fate after all. At today's stall in Exeter, our third at the city's Craft Festival, we achieved a phenomenal 425 sign-ups!

Three practical factors came to our aid. First, the weather: after yesterday's sweltering conditions, today was a degree or so cooler, with a light breeze. This made our walkway location less stuffy, so people were more inclined to stop and talk. Second, more people visited the festival, so footfall past our stall was greater. And third, we had more volunteers, as South and East Devon joined forces to field a combined team of 22. This meant we were able to intercept more passers-by at times of peak flow.

Most encouraging, however, was the fact that a higher proportion of people seemed willing to engage with us. Gone was the lassitude of

yesterday, as people expressed their dismay at the failure of our politicians and their fears about our country's future. Many who joined us were continental Europeans living in the UK or visiting family and friends.

Our position near the festival's food stalls came in handy. We made friends with Rich and Lou Taylor, owner-managers of Beanbug, an organic barista coffee tricycle based in Buckfastleigh. The two signed up to join us. The couple at the nearby pizzeria served excellent fare but their Brexit position was more complex: she had voted Leave, he was for Remain. I left them with our leaflets and expressed my hope that she might change her mind.

The long slow shift to Remain continues. One woman, about to cross High Street in a hurry to get away from me, turned back on impulse and let slip that she had voted Leave in 2016

but had now changed her mind. When I asked her why she said simply, "We were lied to" and "It's such a mess", echoing so many others we've heard over the past three years. Another woman told me that, whereas she had voted Remain, her mother had "believed the lies" and voted Leave but had now also changed her mind.

Abuse was generally at a low level and harmless. Shouty Redneck came by, yelling insults but, as usual, without engaging. More troubling was a return visit from White Hat Man, whom I had met outside Exeter College before and who had caused problems on our first day at the festival. He was provocative and obstructive, preventing others from getting to the stall. I managed to lure him away, tried to keep calm and, with one lapse, more or less succeeded. In the end we

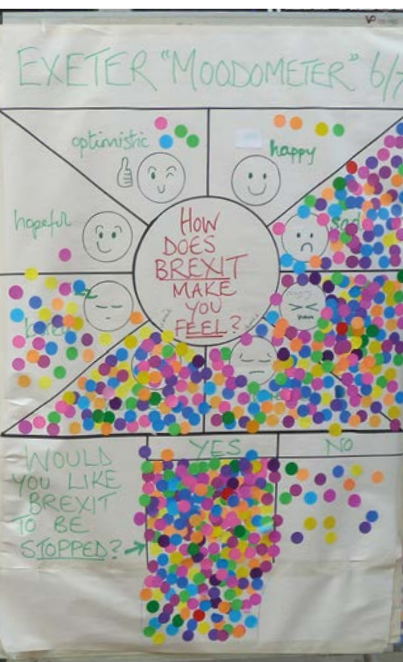
managed to get rid of him without having to call the police, but the incident left me shocked and emotionally drained.

I heard anecdotal evidence of a continuing rise in racism in Torbay. Francois Hay, who works for a well-known language school in Torquay, told me that there is more hostility to foreign students now. "Last year it wasn't this bad," he said.

Exeter's Labour MP Ben Bradshaw stopped by to cheer us on. He told us that Labour's stance is gradually changing and that he is confident it will become a Remain party.

We dished out masses of coach leaflets, but experienced the same problem as yesterday: too many, at this short notice, already have other plans, especially as 20 July is the start of the school holidays. But we continued our approach





of asking people who said they could not go to find two others who could – and many agreed to try.

Today's stunning result was down to the persistence and dedication of our wonderful team. For the third day running, the stall ran from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, some volunteers working two shifts with no more than a short break between them. It was particularly encouraging to see new volunteers settling down quickly and enjoying the experience. Those left after we'd packed up at the end enjoyed tea and a chat on the grass beside Cathedral Yard.

Adding our third day's total of 425 sign-ups to the first day's 208 and the second day's 203 gives a grand total of 836 for the 3-day effort – well ahead of our target of 600. This is a brilliant achievement and all who took part can take great pride in it. Roll on the next festival!

Xenophobes, racists Please – I want my country back From hateful people

"I'm sorry to be leaving,
but I think it's the right moment to go"

"You're all right down here, nearly all white faces"

"Why isolate ourselves from our neighbours?"



11 July 2019: Newton Abbot

"I'm sorry to be leaving, but I think it's the right moment to go."

These are the words of Carmen Cambo, a native of Galicia in northwest Spain, who has lived in the UK for 16 years. Behind her tactful, understated regret lay a sad recognition that our country has changed for the worse. Like many of the 3 million continental Europeans who live and work in the UK, Cambo has experienced increased hostility since the 2016 referendum.

Cambo is an ordinary loss to our country, nothing spectacular – just another waymark on our downward path towards national ruin. As the production manager in a dairy products firm based in Newton Abbot, she takes her

knowledge and skills out of our economy, as well as her tax revenues. Oh, and an Englishman, whom she met and married when she came here. "I'm taking him with me," she says, with just a hint of defiance.

The reasons for Cambo's decision were plain to see on our stall in Courtenay Street, Newton Abbot's anodyne central shopping precinct. One couple expressed frankly racist views, telling us that "if we lived in Birmingham" we would see immigration differently. "You're all right down here," the man said sneeringly, "nearly all white faces." A man seated outside the nearby Costa Coffee shop complained that we were making too much noise: "I don't want to listen to your crap," he said. When I

warned against rising fascism, he shouted: "You're the f***ing fascist." Another old fellow wagged his finger and yelled in our faces: "It's all your fault" – the classical scapegoating of right-wing populism. Two of our volunteers on the table were told they were personally responsible for "starting another civil war". A stream of passers-by gave us glares of hostility and muttered imprecations.

Our valiant volunteers took all this and more in their stride. It's impossible to argue with such people. At times we engaged in "dialogue" that approximated pantomime: "We're out," shouted one woman; "Oh no we're not," we called back; "Oh yes we are!"

One man went in for an elegant reversal of my expectations. "I want to get out," he said, but continued: "Get out of the country, find somewhere sensible to live. Buy an island with only one house on it." By this stage I knew how he felt.

True to form in this polarized town, alongside all the ill will plenty of people greeted our presence with gratitude. Every time this happens, I find it wipes away the pain and grief. We gained 77 new supporters, a strong result for a mid-week stall, and distributed many leaflets on our coaches to London for the 20 July march. Our two Brexitometers

made a fine picture for local MP Anne Marie Morris. The "What price Brexit?" model is particularly effective in a Leave-voting town, because it confronts Leavers with the consequences of their decision.

Three generations of one family visited us: Anthea Mast, her daughter Emily, and her mother. "Stop this fiasco," said Anthea, observing our Brexitometer from her wheelchair while 3-year-old Emily put her stickers on then sampled an EU cupcake. "Why do we want to isolate ourselves from our neighbours? I want to keep the opportunities we have now for the next generation."

We got some positive publicity. I was interviewed by Torquay-based Breeze Radio, which gave me the opportunity to stress the need to come out on our 20 July march.

Our 13 volunteers worked through the lunch hour to maximize our impact. Their overall verdict, after four hours of campaigning, was positive. "It's much better than last time," said one. A big thank you to them.

Incidentally, Cambo's final remark was, "I will come back, once you've stopped Brexit." We soon will, Carmen! So let's not say "Adios" but "Hasta luego".

20 July 2019: London

Our third London march. Thousands, including several coachloads from Devon, converged on Hyde Park Corner, then marched to Parliament Square. Devon for Europe's Campaign Manager was among those who spoke to the crowd.



Let Europe unite
To be strong against Russia
We'll form the EU!

Someone please tell him!
Tell Boris he's not Churchill
But Bozo the Clown

"I hadn't realized there was a worldwide network
of these far-right groups"

16 August 2019: Torquay

Small bugs plagued the start of our stall in Torquay yesterday, but we overcame them and went on to have a pretty good day.

We arrived to find market day in full swing at our usual spot in Union Street, so we pitched in a side-lane that was just outside the area controlled by the market but still within sight and hearing of stallholders, who weren't at all pleased to see us. We soon had a visit from Torbay's Senior Events Officer, who was kindness itself in allowing us to continue despite our not having had the necessary permission. Then came an unexpected shower: I nipped back to the car to fetch the umbrellas I had optimistically left behind, but of course by the time I got back the rain had stopped. A nut was missing from our Brexitometer easel! The final straw

was a visit from a representative of the Town Centre Partnership responsible for administering the market, who told us that stallholders were threatening to withhold their dues unless we moved.

So move we did. Our new home, two minutes walk away outside a vacant shop at the top of Fleet Street, was actually a better spot, with higher footfall and no grumbles from stallholders or neighbours. Our cheerful team shifted our tables and kit, and we were soon open for business again.

And what was business like? It went in fits and starts; a flurry of interest followed by a lull, then renewed engagement and dialogue. Abuse was low-level and we were never threatened.

27 July 2019, New York Times

**Winston Churchill
Would Despise
Boris Johnson**



I enjoyed a rational, friendly conversation with another Leaver who could not accept the democratic case for a People’s vote and cited the usual Project Fear arguments about the prospects for our country. I asked him if he had heard James O’Brian’s recent interview with

I met Amy, a middle-aged local woman who had voted Leave in 2016 and whose sons had persuaded her to change her mind. One of them was a ballet dancer, frustrated because he can no longer apply for jobs in continental Europe. Amy described herself as “more open-minded now, and looking at the facts”. She had done her own research and realized she had been lied to. So she signed up to join us.

Another Leaver began by saying, “Oh, you won’t like me.” She had joined UKIP at the time of the referendum but had now left it. She described herself as “caught in the middle”, on the way to changing her mind but not yet fully converted. “The penny is dropping,” she said, expressing concern about jobs and opportunities for the young. She was worried about Nigel Farage and had seen a frightening film about Steve Bannon. “I hadn’t realized there was a worldwide network of these far-right groups,” she said. In 2016 people had “acted on feelings, not facts”. I explained that she could join us on a provisional basis, unsubscribing if she decided we were not for her. She did so – and we gave her a hug and a chocolate chip cookie.

a van driver dependent on “just in time” deliveries who stands to lose his entire business if we come out without a deal. At that point another member of the public entered the dialogue to say, politely, that in his experience few Leave voters seemed to understand how to today’s regional economy works. The Leaver took away our facts leaflet and said he would reflect...

One couple, on holiday from London, thanked us for what we were doing. She had voted Conservative all her life, but “not now”, she said firmly, a look of steel in her eye.

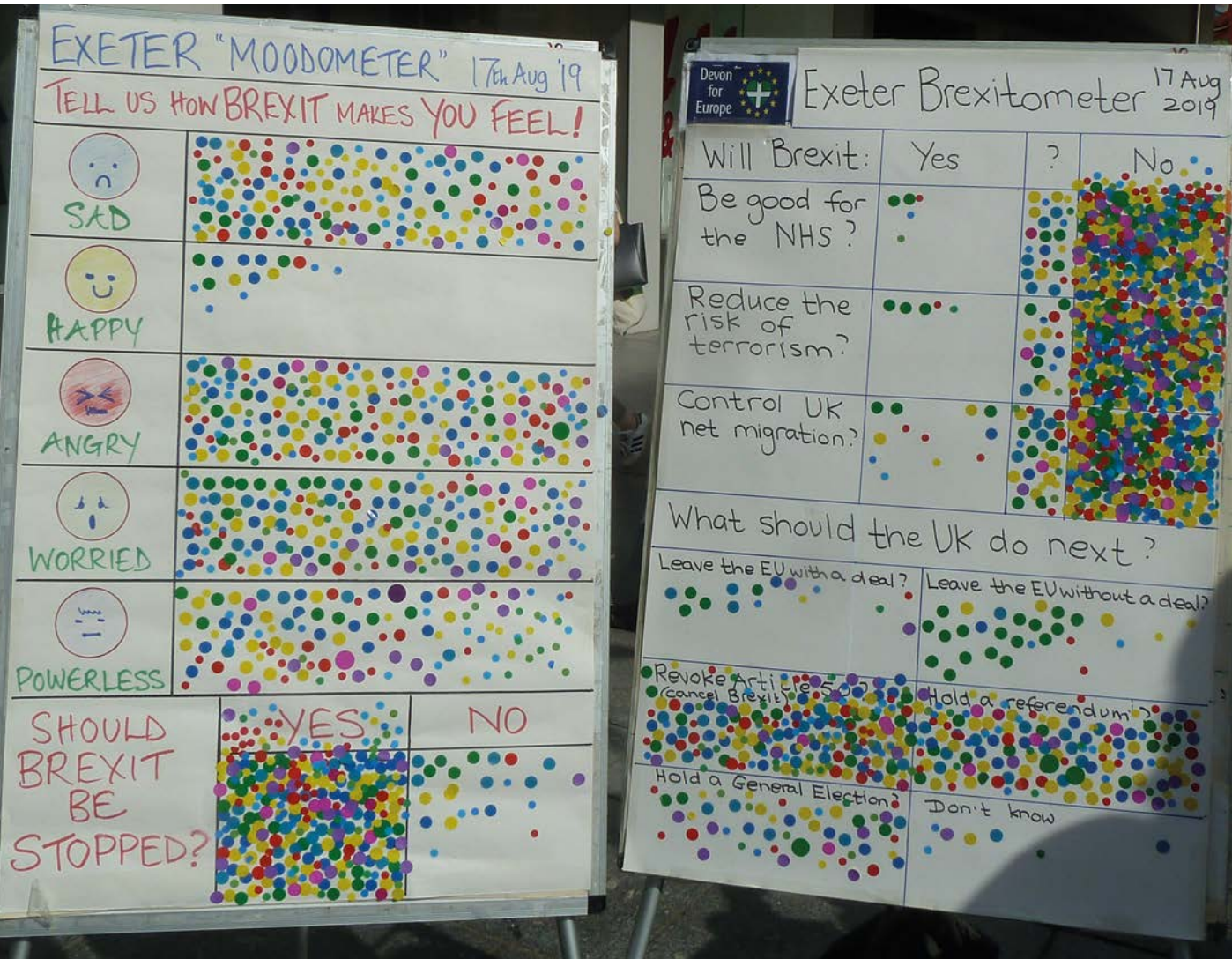
Towards the end of the morning interest tailed off. Drove of people walked past us, stony-faced, refusing to engage. When will they wake up?

Our tally for the day was 63 sign-ups, not bad for a mid-week stall but lower than our two previous visits to Torquay. Opinion here is clearly shifting, but still too slowly.

Our team of eight volunteers was the perfect size and showed the usual excellent team spirit. Most willingly stayed on until 2.00 pm, to make up for lost time at the start.

17 August 2019: Exeter

Another day, another street stall – this time in Exeter, run by our colleagues in East Devon. Just one pic that says it all: this is what people now think and feel about Brexit!



Johnson, Rees-Mogg, Gove

No dream team. A nightmare born Of a sick nation

“This is such a Leavey place; it’s wonderful to see you here”

21 August 2019: Dawlish



Our stall in Dawlish got off to an edgy start, but we recovered from this to chalk up a minor public relations victory.

The town looked beguiling on this fine August morning, as we set out our wares on the main shopping street overlooking the Green. Not so its people, who scowled at us and growled their opposition to our presence. A café owner swore at us.

It wasn’t long before we had a visit from Mark, the community police officer. He told us he had received complaints about our behaviour and.... well, to be truthful a couple of us had lapsed momentarily from the high standards of politeness and charm we set ourselves. We are only human – and it’s hard to turn the other cheek every time you are subjected to abuse and insults.

Mark acknowledged our right to be there but said that, because Brexit was so controversial, there was a risk of our

upsetting local people. He’d prefer it if we were to confine our activities to the area round our stall, on the side of the street without any shops. As footfall was much lower here, that would have implied sending half our volunteers home. I asked Mark if he would allow me to caution our team and see if we could improve matters. After some discussion he agreed to this, so I went round to every volunteer and explained the situation.



From that moment on everyone on our team behaved impeccably! We smiled when they told us we should be lined up at dawn and shot; we purred, “Have a nice day, sir”, to old men who said we should leave the country; we murmured polite platitudes when they wagged their fingers in our faces and said there were too many immigrants. Lord Jesus Christ himself could not have done better.

Matters slowly improved as the town filled up, more holiday makers appeared and our stall began to attract Remainers. “This is such a Leavey place; it’s wonderful to see you here,” said one grateful woman. One old lady gave us hugs, after overhearing someone wish us dead and gone.

An hour or so after our first conversation I went over to Mark, still keeping an eye on us from the other side of the street, and asked him if there had been any more complaints. “I have had one or two,” he said, ‘but it’s more about what you’re doing than the way you’re doing

it. So as far as I’m concerned, you can carry on.” I told him I thought this was a shrewd observation and a fair decision. And I thanked him for it. I have nothing but praise for the police and other officials I’ve met on our streets during these difficult times.

We pushed the stall’s end time on by half an hour to take advantage of a flurry of interest around lunch-time. By 1.30 pm, after three-and-a-half hours, we had reached 75 sign-ups – a strong result in this difficult place.

We repaired to the legendary Gay Creamery, where we sat outside and enjoyed cream teas. I commended the team and told them how well we had done to regain the respect and trust of the police after those initial lapses.

Our experience in Dawlish was a lesson in how important it is going to be, in the testing weeks that lie ahead, to maintain the highest standards of public behaviour. The Leavers, and those in government, want us to lose our cool. We must disappoint them. And we will.

Picking crops in fields Jobs the migrants used to do Food now rots. For shame

24 August 2019: Salcombe

Today Salcombe lived up to its moniker of “Chelsea-on-Sea”. The place seemed jam-packed with well-heeled Londoners.

To beat the bank holiday weekend crowds, we arrived early, breakfasted “on location”, then set up outside the Harbour Café – one of the few spots in the town’s narrow central lanes where there’s room for a stall. To save space we made it a single-table affair and ran only one Brexitometer. The staff in the café welcomed us, so long as we didn’t block their sign. I made sure to say we’d be customers during the day.

We soon found we’d chosen a hot-spot. The sun beat down, sending some of us periodically onto the shady side of the street to cool off. My EU umbrella came in handy! A round of delicious ice-creams, made in Salcombe and bought at the café, also helped.

Business was quite lively, but many holidaymakers signalled an understandable desire to avoid politics. This year as last we met a surprisingly high number of Leavers, most of them local. The butcher opposite us came out of his shop to tell me we shouldn’t be there as we were trying to frustrate “the will of the people”. With this man, as with others, trying to counter this assertion proved fruitless. Does he not know that many of his customers during the season are from the continent? As usual, almost every Leaver refused our Facts leaflet. For such people the awakening, when it comes, will be rude indeed.

We also met plenty of Remainers. One was a local farmer, angry at having been lied to – just one more indication that the farming community is waking up. Most sign-ups, however, were city-dwellers from outside the county while a few were continental Europeans.

As the morning wore on and the heat increased, interest tailed off. We stopped at 1.00 pm sharp, before our fried brains and bodies seized up. A big thank you to our eight

volunteers. In three hours we achieved 61 sign-ups, 48 of them (78%) from outside the county. Are such places worth the sweat? Who can say?



29 August 2019, The Independent

Labour's support among UK students nearly halves in 18 months amid Brexit frustration, survey suggests

Jeremy Corbyn
You had the youth vote sewn up
Thank you. You lost it

28 August 2019, inews.co.uk

Queen approves Boris Johnson's request to suspend Parliament – limiting options for MPs to block no-deal Brexit



29 August 2019: Totnes

The coup has acted as a catalyst!

Mr Johnson's attempt to shut Parliament out of the biggest decision facing our country since World War 2 has sharpened public engagement, with concern spreading beyond Brexit to its consequences for our democracy. At our stall in Totnes today we experienced a new intensity in our interactions with the public, as Leavers joined Remainers in expressing their anger and distress.

"It's a step too far," as one of our volunteers put it. Several people said they found the smirk on the Prime Minister's face as he announced the news particularly distasteful. In one interaction I cited Fintan O'Toole in the Irish Times, who has written that, if lies were flies, we would not longer be able to see Mr Johnson's face for the buzzing swarm that covered it.


We brought a new placard, "Stop the Coup", quickly put together by my wife. Homespun is best, they say – and it served its purpose well, triggering debate and drawing people to the stall. A big thank you to her.

The town was quiet when we arrived, but filled up gradually as the morning went on. A high proportion of passers-by stopped to engage with us. Our stall was at times surrounded and indifference seemed a thing of the past.

One of my most positive conversations was with Catherine Taylor, International Student Activity Leader for a local language school, and her mother Elspeth, in town together for the day. It began depressingly, as Catherine told me that she and her colleagues at the school have noticed increased hostility towards international students in the past year or so. "People tell them they're not welcome," she said. "Someone even said this to a 14-year-old." In at least two incidents this summer, violence had been threatened.

I said that there is poison in our body politic and our society and that this poison must be drawn. After that, the patient will recover. I mentioned the placard I had seen on one of our London marches: "Brexit is the bloody, messy birth of a European Britain" and that, underlying the hatred and divisiveness of Brexit, we see growing levels of public awareness of how Europe works, why it matters and why Britain must belong. I told them I believe that our country will emerge stronger from this national trauma, a more mature nation ready to engage as an equal partner in Europe, rather than as bullying overlord or humiliated underdog. I said that the darkest hour comes just before dawn and that we are now going through that hour.

Catherine replied that that she expected a "long period of darkness" before the new



"People tell our foreign students they're not welcome. Someone even said this to a 14-year-old"

dawn comes. I replied that I'm an optimist and that this was a practical philosophy, because by being optimistic we make good outcomes more likely – and sooner too. We also live longer, according to recent research! I recommended The Optimism Bias, by Tali Sharot, which has an excellent discussion of the power of the self-fulfilling prophecy. I gave them both a hug and they left looking more cheerful, having signed up to join us.

By the end of the stall we had achieved 88 sign-ups, a new high for a mid-week stall. We also told lots of people about the Stop the Coup rally in Exeter on Saturday and the coach to London on 3 September to greet our MPs as Parliament reconvenes after the summer recess.

We were blessed with many volunteers for this stall – so many that I was able to despatch two pairs to do peripheral leafleting. One pair covered the Plains, at the bottom of High Street, while

the other pair went uphill to Fore Street. Both came back reporting similar levels of positive engagement to those we enjoyed on the stall. They had also had a knock-on effect on the number of people visiting the stall.

The great reforms in this country – think the abolition of slavery, votes for women – have been achieved because small groups of people began by putting their foot down and saying "This will not do". Ridiculed, insulted and abused at first, they gradually won the argument, not by might but because they were right. Eventually a tipping point was reached and the opinions of the few became those of the many, leading to changes in government policy and the law.

I believe we are now at a tipping point in the struggle against Brexit. As spontaneous protests break out across the country this weekend, the next few days will be critical. Fingers crossed, everyone!

31 August 2019: Exeter



Do my eyes deceive?
I see an imposter where
Parliament should be

A fab day in Exeter working the crowds at our rally with five other volunteers. We took around 117 sign-ups! The mobile stall concept³ works a treat. Fantastic atmosphere. We are going to get our country back!

Our day began with coffee and setting up at EU-friendly Carluccio's, where we took our first sign-up – one of the staff. Then out into the crowds. A sharpish rain shower didn't diminish our spirits. Great speeches (I believe, couldn't hear them!) from Ben Bradshaw, Sarah Wollaston and Devon for Europe's campaign manager. Some excellent messaging in the banners and signs too. We met some lovely people.

³ Essentially, one person moving through the crowd with a tray of leaflets, stickers and sign-up cards. A "shadow" accompanies them, to make sure they stay safe.





Things are looking up The Shouty Stop Brexit Man All over the news

5 September 2019: Asburton

As I was recovering from a minor operation I didn't lead our stall in Ashburton yesterday, so wasn't expecting to write it up. But the colleague who kindly led it on my behalf is busy, so here goes. I took no notes, so these are just a few memories.

The town was quiet this Thursday morning; it also seemed good-humoured, Leavers mostly walking by without rancour. We signed up 42 new joiners, with one of our volunteers gaining 20 of these – slow and steady, stopping “one of three”, seemed to be the way he did it. For a change I sat quietly behind the table, so signed up only two people. And (let's admit it!), I enjoyed chatting to other volunteers.

At one stage a robust exchange did take place round our Brexitometer. An older man called our youngest female volunteer a “poppet”; we wondered briefly what the right riposte would have been: “boring old fart” doesn't cut it. “Jerk? Wanker? Wazzock? Pillock? Dickhead?” Your suggestions please...

We were bang outside Martins, Ashburton's friendly newsagent, so I went in to pick up the New European. “How about a packet of Mr Kipling cakes to feed the troops?” proffered the shopkeeper. I accepted – “Very British,” I said. “You see? People say we're not proper Brits, not patriots, but we are! It's

just that we have a dual identity – British and European.” “Ah,” replied the shopkeeper, “I have a triple identity: one parent American, one Devonian and I'm courting a beautiful Lithuanian!” I congratulated him on his excellent choices in life.

Back to the stall, where I spent the remainder of the morning enjoying the sugar rush and feeling glad I had a good excuse for not helping to pack up.

The operation, just the day before at Torbay's Mount Stuart hospital, went well, by the way. The nurse who “processed” me before and after recognized me: I had signed her up at our recent stall in Dawlish. “That's great, I know I'll be in good hands,” I said, as she helped me into the hospital gown. “But I hope the anaesthetist and surgeon also voted Remain...”



Yes Boris Johnson We will unite, it's true. But, To get rid of you

7 September 2019: Totnes Pride



What more could I wish for my country than what Totnes showed me on Saturday?

Our stall there was timed to coincide with the annual Totnes Pride event. I arrived to find our line-up of volunteers refreshed by a trio of gloriously joyful and colourful young ones whose exuberance perfectly complemented the skills and experience of the older generation. Together, we'd make a great team!

Still in recovery mode after surgery, I took my seat behind the table, where someone covered me with a colourful wrap. Free apples and focaccia followed, plus a cuppa. What kindness!

The stall was lively from the start as the town geared up for its annual celebration of sexual and gender diversity. Young faces and colourful costumes queued up to fill out sign-up forms or complete our Moodometer. Even the local community police officer signalled her support.

We didn't have quite enough volunteers to fulfil the original plan, which was to go up and down the High Street with three "usherette trays" in addition to running the stall. But after a while, curious to see more of the town and its people on this special day, I ventured out with a tray myself. As I moved up



"Some in the gay community don't yet recognize the threat posed by the UK's departure"

the High Street, I met more and more people who wanted to join us.

My progress slowed to a crawl. In the end I just stood there – and gaped, and marvelled! There I was, surrounded by colour, vibrancy, openness, acceptance, gentleness, kindness. All bathed in the light of compassion that dawns when people start to celebrate diversity instead of resenting it. This is a totally different country to the one I grew up in – that shadowy place of guilt and repression, of the love that "dare not speak its name". And I am so, so thankful for that!

Despite their different objectives, the Pride movement and the pro-EU movement have much in common. Both embrace diversity, both celebrate complex identities, both seek to preserve or enhance hard-won rights and freedoms. Yet as one of our volunteers pointed out, there are some in the gay community who don't yet recognize the threat to gay rights posed by the UK's departure from the EU. "Awareness isn't high enough," she said.

At 12.30 pm it was time to pack up, as our next fixture, a rally in Exeter, beckoned. My thanks to our eight volunteers.

We signed up 84 new joiners in Totnes and a further 28 in Exeter, making 112 in all. A fantastic day's campaigning in and for the rainbow nation that the UK might, just might, one day become.

Mrs. May had hoped To deport more black people Before she was caught

14 September 2019, The Guardian

Chased into 'self-deportation': the most disturbing Windrush case so far

"If I saw Cameron, I'd give him a Glasgow kiss"

18 September 2019: Plymouth College of Art



Third time lucky! Today's stall outside Plymouth College of Art took place in bright sunshine and a light breeze, a contrast to the two previous occasions we'd been there, when rain forced us to stop early. In the near perfect conditions, people seemed willing to stop and chat. Our team of eight volunteers signed up 70 new supporters in three hours, an excellent result for a mid-week stall. Most were students or staff at the college. A couple of tutors gave friendly greetings to one of our young volunteers, who last year completed a foundation course there.

Besides the London march on 19 October, we emphasized voter registration, handing out many copies of the new card on this. My impression was that, in contrast to the situation three years ago, most students are now registered to vote. This is encouraging!

We met one or two Leavers who confessed to a change of heart, but still not the avalanche of converts we need if we are to be sure to win a second referendum. One of us converted a young Conservative who said he "hadn't previously thought about it much".

Abuse was at a low level and there was no sign of "Brickman", as we must call him – an unwelcome assailant at last Friday's stall outside the university, who threatened to "brick us" if he ever saw us there again.

One man told me a good joke by a German stand-up comedian: "To be an immigrant, you have to move to somewhere better. If you move somewhere worse, you're an aid worker." I laughed ruefully at the implication for the state of the UK today.

Lastly, an excellent euphemism. "If I saw David Cameron I'd give him a Glasgow kiss," said one woman. It means a head butt, apparently. You learn something new on every street stall.

20 September 2019: Plymouth

Today's stall in Plymouth was an enjoyable affair in which we got "down among the young ones" – not quite literally in my case.

At the prompting of one of our regular volunteers I had re-located and re-timed our stall to bring it close to the YouthStrike4Climate protest. Sure enough, soon after we set up the first students appeared, bearing their powerfully worded banners.

We were understaffed on the stall. That plus the fact that one of our usherette trays had broken meant we were unable to implement Plan A, to move among the crowds with two trays. Nevertheless, I and another volunteer went on walkabout with a single tray.

We set off in what we thought was the right direction, towards Armada Way. But.... where were the protesters? Unfortunately the instructions and map describing the event were misleading, but we eventually caught up with the rally on the upper side of Drake Circus.

The moment we mingled with the crowd, enthusiastic

young people thronged round us. We did a roaring trade in stickers and badges and there was a steady flow of sign-ups. There was also strong interest in the London march on 19 October, especially when we mentioned subsidized tickets.

Then the march went off at a lick and, still engaged with sign-ups, I and my colleague got left behind! I caught up with the back of the march on Armada Way and once again began gaining sign-ups. I was just attending to one when suddenly the person completing the card lay down on the ground. "What are you doing down there?" I asked. She pointed to others around us and I saw that almost everyone was now horizontal. Doh! It was a die-in!

I wanted to join in, but lying down is tricky when you're carrying an usherette's tray, so I had to remain vertical. Eventually everyone stood up again and I was able to resume our busy trade.

Meanwhile, the few volunteers on the stall in Old Town Street were also hard at work. Most customers were students in search of stickers, but there was also a steady accumulation of sign-ups. Many young people said they felt adults and Parliament were failing to listen to them. Abuse was low, mostly grumbles about our being "undemocratic".

Both at the stall itself and on walkabout, most of the young people we met seemed to understand the links between staying in the EU and combatting climate change without our needing to explain them. In sum, it's a global problem requiring global solutions; only by working with our friends and neighbours in Europe can the UK be effective at the regional level; specifically, how can our country put pressure on countries such as Brazil if it is not a member of the world's largest trading bloc? The EU's suspension of its trade deal negotiations with Brazil in response to the burning of the Amazon is a vivid example of what can be achieved by acting together.

None of this means we are oblivious to the limitations of current EU action on climate change and the negative consequences of some of its trade, in crops such as soya and oil palm which contribute directly to tropical deforestation. It is simply that we believe it is better to stay in and seek reform than to come out and become a powerless spectator.

We achieved 88 sign-ups, 53 of them from "usheretting" and the balance from the stall. With a couple more volunteers and another tray in circulation, we could have doubled that score. That will be for next time. And there certainly will be a next time, as it's clear that dovetailing with these protests is a highly effective way of reaching young people.



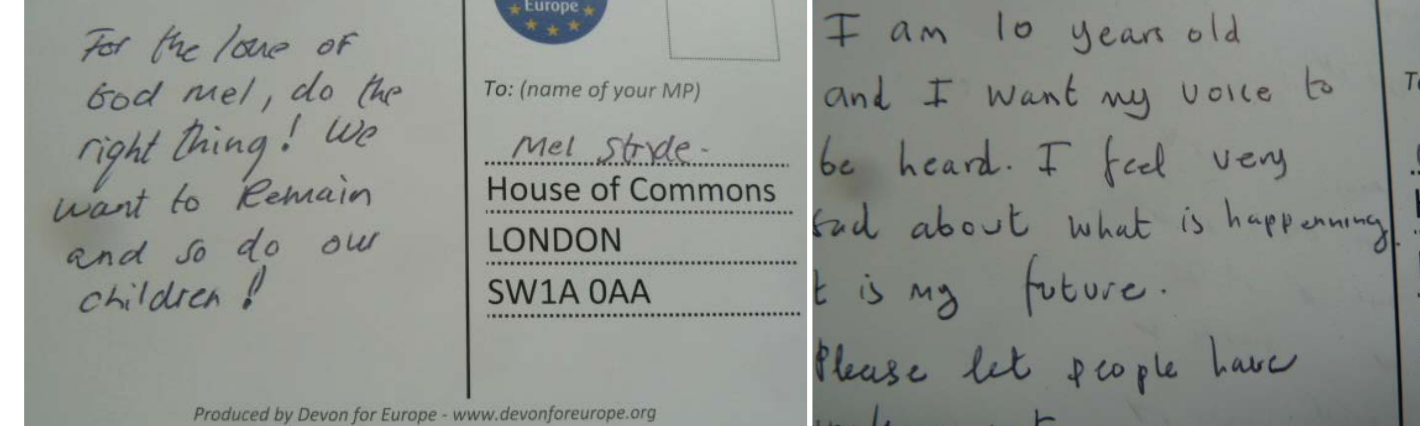
Bleak, bleaker, bleakest Oh how Britain is falling From a lofty height

21 September 2019: Buckfastleigh

Buckfastleigh was quiet this morning as we set up our stall at the top of Fore Street. But a quite high proportion of those who did pass by stopped to engage with us.

Most of the 42 who signed up to join us did so without hesitation. "Oh absolutely," said one man, whom I asked if he thought it a good idea to stop Brexit. "Right on," said another, taking the pen and card out of my hand. Others thanked us for being there, asked us what hope there was, and eagerly sent postcards to local MP Mel Stride. Two of these made impassioned pleas on behalf of the next generation.

Yet in Buckfastleigh as elsewhere, opinion is still sharply polarized. Most of the Leavers we met emphasized the need to respect democracy. This is always the hardest pitch for us to play



on and I still find it difficult to convince Leavers that the 2016 referendum was flawed and should be declared nul and void. The allegation that Russian money was involved simply isn't believed. Nor is it accepted that a supermajority is needed for a change of this magnitude. "Rubbish!" we are told.

Some Leavers displayed that fatal English combination of ignorance and arrogance. As we were setting up, one passer-by asked us who we were. "Devon for Europe," I said proudly, to which he replied: "I love Devon, I hate Europe." Later on, a young man swaggered past us with the words, "I like being ignorant." I found I had no reply, save a muttered "Oh dear."

Given the low footfall, we had a surplus of volunteers. I despatched two to a spot further up the road, opposite the Co-op. Their distance from the stall proper meant fewer

sign-ups – something about the table and its leaflets convinces people we are serious and worth supporting – but they reported plenty of interesting conversations and were able to direct people on to our stall.

At 12.50 pm an already quiet town became sepulchral, so we decided to pack up early. I moved round to the back of the table to start putting things away and then... wallop and a howl of pain! I had been attacked from behind, not by a Leaver but by a whiteboard! Our Brexitometer, caught by a gust of wind, had come crashing down and gouged a chunk out of the back of my leg. Our volunteers took great care of me, making sure I sat down and remained conscious while they dismantled the stall, called an ambulance and, eventually, took me to Totnes hospital where I had four stitches put in under local anaesthetic. I was touched by the kindness of all who helped: thank you!

"I like being ignorant"

We are horrified
As Far Right politicians
Hijack our country

24 September 2019, The Guardian

Johnson's suspension of parliament unlawful, supreme court rules



25 September 2019: Exeter College

"Ah, sick!" said one student appreciatively when I explained who we were and what we were doing.

You learn a lot about our language and how it's evolving when you volunteer on Devon for Europe's street stalls. This was new usage to me, but according to one of our volunteers who is a parent of school-age kids it's now quite common to hear "sick" used to mean "great, excellent, outstanding".

At any rate I took it as a mark of approval and signed the young woman up. She was one of 65 new joiners in three hours of campaigning outside Exeter College. Nearly all were students but a few were staff. Encouragingly, I once again had the impression that most 16- to 18-year-olds were already registered to vote, but we met a few who weren't and gave them our new card on this, impressing on them the urgency of taking this step. There



is an outside chance that a new referendum could, through an amendment to the bill making it lawful, be designed this time to include this age-group, denied a vote in 2016. So it is worth emphasizing the need to register.

A high proportion of the students we spoke with said they might come to London for what we hope will be our last big demo, on 19 October. This time we had a flier to remind them to go online and book their tickets. Many were cheered by the offer of discounts for students.

One young woman said sadly that she was unsure she'd be able to come, as her parents had voted Leave. She was eager to take all our information, including our Fact sheet, so as to start a dialogue in her family. I wished her good luck with that and she smiled back, a little wanly.

Towards the end of the stall we met a member of staff who said, "Thank you, you're doing a fantastic job." She was one of several who were quietly appreciative. But we also encountered a few staff members who, to their shame, seemed to be pro-Brexit. A few students also fell into this category, loudly (and in one case loudly) proclaiming their wish to Leave, whatever the consequences.

The students came in pulses, as they went to and from classes. When we first arrived, at 10.30 am, there were masses of them about. But by the time we had set up, they had all disappeared! Next time we come to Exeter College we should perhaps start half an hour earlier.

But will there be a next time? Perhaps Brexit will be cancelled before we come back to Exeter College. Now that would be well sick!

One MP murdered Do the others speak out? No. They cower, appease

27 September 2009, The Times

Deliver Brexit or face riots, minister warns Johnson

“You should be lined up and shot”

28 September 2019: Torquay



I began our stall in Torquay today by gathering our team of volunteers into a huddle and asking them for “heightened safety awareness”. I said that, because of the language used in Parliament by our Prime Minister and other ministers and advisors, we faced a higher than usual risk of abuse and aggression from Leavers. I asked our volunteers to keep calm and reminded them of our safety guidelines and procedures in case of attack.

Let’s press pause and reflect on that for a moment. This is England in 2019, a land once renowned for moderation in its politics and public debate. I don’t seek to glorify our role as campaigners – we are just doing what our convictions compel us to do – but I find it deeply disturbing that I and my colleagues are risking our limbs and perhaps even our lives for these convictions, because our leaders are deliberating inciting violence against us. In this they are aided and abetted by parts of the Press: I find it equally disturbing that The Times yesterday headlined a minister’s warning of riots if Brexit isn’t delivered at the end of October. Is that a threat or a promise?

In the event we had a lively first hour or two in which we encountered plenty of angry Leavers, but the anger did not spill over into fighting. Several of us were told repeatedly that we were traitors and “should be lined up and shot”. “F*** off, traitor,” one man shouted at me, shaking his fist as he went by. Another old man showered us with a torrent of abuse, wagging his finger furiously, until another member of the public, a woman, intervened to tell him we were wholly within our rights to stand there and defend what we

believed in. They then had an angry set-to in which we played no part.

Let me at this point commend all our volunteers for their calm and dignity in the face of this. They took all of it in their stride, smiling cheerfully at whoever and whatever came along.

Later in the morning the anger seemed to have abated. We all enjoyed some excellent conversations and the sign-up rate quickened. Many people expressed their concerns about the language used by Mr Johnson. One couple who had voted Leave said they were disgusted by his defilement of Jo Cox’s memory to defend the very project she had campaigned against.

There was moderate interest in coming to London by coach on 19 October. One man said he would give up a day of work in order to come. I commended him and said I wished more people would do this. “I’m sorry, I have to work” is the commonest reason we get for refusing, but I have often felt that if people really knew what was at stake they would not hesitate to take a day off.

One man wearing a dark suit and tie told me his German wife had died of cancer a few months ago. On hearing the 2016 referendum result she had said, “I might just as well go

home.” The widower took a coach leaflet and said that maybe he would come, in his wife’s memory. I told him I was sorry she had not lived to see Brexit reversed, which it surely will be.

Interest tailed off in the early afternoon, as it often does. We stopped at 1.00 pm sharp, having signed up 65 new supporters. Our volunteers, who at my request had arrived early, worked a long morning, nearly all staying until the end of the stall. Thank you!



To love your country You do not decimate it With hatred and lies

"I admire you and appreciate what you do.
I voted Leave, but I'm man enough to say
that perhaps I made a mistake"

3 October 2019: Newton Abbot

"Stuff them," said one elderly Leave-voting woman, of her own children and grandchildren. I had asked her to think again about Brexit for their sakes, if not for her own.

It was, for me, the most shocking remark made in a morning spent among the inhabitants of Newton Abbot that shocked, dismayed and... yes, hurt all of us who were on the stall. I sometimes think that if those who make these remarks could understand the collective impact they have on the image of their town in the eyes of outsiders they would feel ashamed. And then my doubts flood in again, for these people know no shame.

In *Fascism: A Warning*, Madeleine Albright coins the phrase "moral numbness" to

describe the antithesis of empathy that allows fascism to thrive. That is exactly what we come across on street stalls: time and again I come away from exchanges with Leavers feeling that they have lost the capacity to imagine how others feel. They no longer care for the livelihoods of others, for the good opinions of our friends and neighbours in Europe, for the opportunities available to the next generation, even for the fate of their own children and grandchildren. They are walled in, trapped in the darkness of their own narrow and ever shrinking world, wholly consumed by their own misery.

And of course, we are to blame. One man, who had voted Remain in 2016, said he would vote Leave if given another referendum,



because "it's people like you who've stopped it from happening." Useless to say that Brexit is failing because of its inherent contradictions, that if the project were any good it would have gone through by now. As usual, myths abounded: one woman even came out with the bendy bananas story, which she "knew" to be true.

And yet the darkness was shot through with gleams of light. "Language matters," said one woman, disgusted at Mr Johnson's dismissal of women MPs' fears, and especially the fact that he had dragged Jo Cox into his justification for Brexit. One man stormed off after an angry exchange with one of our volunteers, but came back a few minutes later

for further dialogue, ending in a handshake and a promise to “think about it”. I had a conversation with one woman whose decency, common sense and lucidity came through with great force. The rarity of such encounters highlights the emotional and mental mess that most people seem to be in, but they are reassuring nonetheless. It’s like one of those horror films in which the entire population of Earth has been turned into aliens, barring a few brave souls who must lead the fight-back without becoming infected. The odds seem long, but you know they’re going to succeed in the end!

This was a tough gig and by 1.00 pm our volunteers had had enough. Our thanks to them for their endurance. Together we achieved 59 sign-ups and elicited some interest, though to my mind not enough, in our 19 October march in London.

Two conversations at the far end of the stall epitomized the polarization we see in Newton Abbot.

As we were packing up a former military man came up to us. He argued forcefully but articulately that we were wrong to go against democracy and to try to overturn the 2016 vote. “Why can’t you accept it?” he asked repeatedly. Several of us engaged with him, seemingly without denting his certainty that we were in the wrong. But he shook hands and left peacefully, after I’d



said that we understood and respected his views.

Then, as we took the stall kit back to the car park, a man wound down his car window to talk with us. “Uh oh,” we thought, “Here we go again.” But we were pleasantly surprised. “I just want to say I am full of admiration for you and appreciate what you do,” he said. “I voted Leave, but I’m man enough to be able to say that perhaps I made a mistake. You really stand up for what you believe in. I saw a member of the public having a go at one of you outside Costa Coffee and I came over and said to him, ‘Don’t have a go at these people. They are prepared to speak up for what they believe in.’ Once again, I just want to say I really admire and appreciate you. Thank you for doing what you are doing.”

This redemptive final encounter made our day. Thank you, whoever you were. You made a huge difference to our morale.

One day a conscience Met a politician and Ran to save itself

“You’re welcome; it’s good to allow people
to express their opinions”

5 October 2019: South Brent

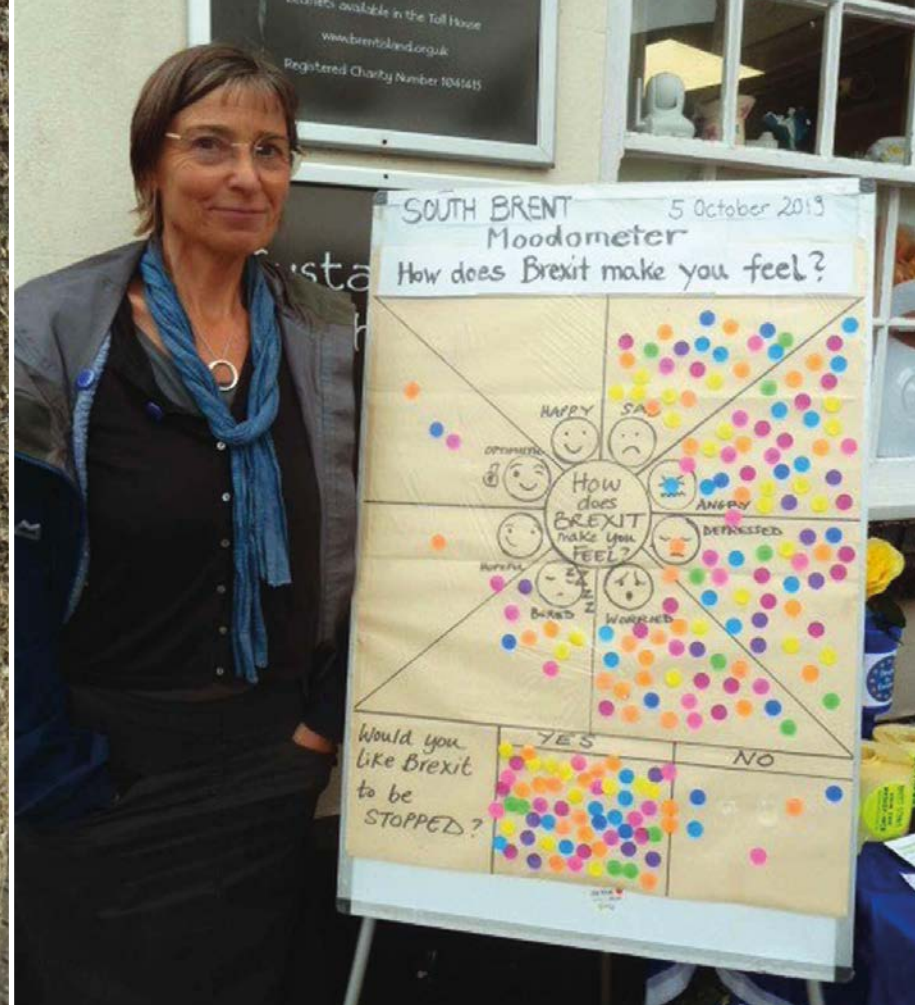
After the rigours of Newton Abbot it was a joy to come to South Brent, where a cohesive but open local community seems determined to downplay differences over Brexit. Instead of the new tribalism, older British virtues such as tolerance and broadmindedness seem to hold sway.

This attitude was epitomized by the local shopkeeper, outside whose premises we pitched our stall. She came out to greet us and, when I said I hoped we weren’t in the way and there were no complaints about us, told me, “You’re welcome; it’s good to allow people to express their opinions.” Instead of abusing us, Leavers more often expressed their disagreement with a mild wind-up or a wry chuckle. “I believe in a united Europe under British rule,” one man

said, but couldn’t hide a mischievous grin as he said it. Only one man, a farmer, told us to “get stuffed”. And there was one woman, early on, who frowned when approached and told me she supported the English Defence League.

The town was quiet and we signed up only 32 new supporters, fewer than on our first stall here a year ago. In South Brent as in other places recently, there is some evidence that we are reaching saturation point, as several passers-by said they had already joined us. Still, there were plenty of good conversations and many added their marks to our Brexitometer, which by the end gave out a strong message.

A Leave-voting woman farmer said she was unwilling to add her stickers to the



whiteboard, as “they’ll only rip ‘em off again after we’ve gone.” Told that we wouldn’t do that, she said she was “optimistic” about Brexit and placed her sticker accordingly. A beef producer, she didn’t export but acknowledged others did. “Tariffs work both ways,” she said, “What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.” This sounded wise, in a country folk-ish kind of way, but I’m not sure it made much sense. I said merely that

we’d come and interview her again a year from now.

One couple, an Irish man and a Welsh woman who signed up from their car, were seriously worried about medical supplies. They lived locally and were already unable to obtain the medication he needs from the local pharmacy. Alternative products had been proposed, but they were “more expensive and less effective”.

I had an interesting exchange with a Buddhist, who professed himself unconcerned about Brexit. “It’s a temporal issue, not a spiritual one,” he said. I countered that it was a battle for the soul of our country: “It’s about whether and how we engage with others, especially our friends and neighbours on the continent,” I said. I cited the Sufi saying: “I am the other, the other is me. If I wish to travel towards myself, I must go through the other.” The Buddhist would not accept my extrapolation from the individual to the country. In the end he smiled and walked on, still unconcerned – but I hope I gave him food for mystical contemplation.

Another conversation was with a climate pessimist, who told me climate change was a far more important issue than Brexit but that the cause was already lost. We were due to be engulfed by a tidal wave of destruction, and mitigation of the worst effects was all we could hope for now. My argument that the climate issue was linked to Brexit fell on deaf ears. I was struck by his nihilism – and by the fact that this is shared by so many others, especially young people.

I met a French woman who expressed her quiet despair at what was happening to our country. She had been here nearly 30 years and there was nowhere else she could call home. She signed up to join us and I told her about the “3 Million”, the online support group for continental Europeans living here.

In sum, it was a day of varied opinions, for the most part cheerfully expressed despite the undertow of pessimism increasingly affecting so many. My thanks to our committed local organizers, as well as to our other volunteers.

At 12.45 the drizzle intensified, so we packed up and repaired to the Rowan Tree café, adjacent to the village shop and under the same friendly management. In the evening my wife and I went to an understated pro-EU social at the Old School Centre, where we enjoyed excellent European food, drink and music – and excellent company too.

The local community in South Brent is alive and welcoming, whoever you are and wherever you come from, geographically and politically. Check it out, Newton Abbot.



“My business will be finished if we don’t stop Brexit”

9 October 2019: Totnes

Another day, another stall. Today a routine effort in friendly Totnes, in a mix of rain and shine.

We had two aims: sign people up as supporters and persuade them to come to London on 19 October. We were successful in both, finishing with 85 new supporters on our books and a mass of coach leaflets given out.

The town was quiet when we started, but livened up as the morning went on. We had more than enough volunteers to deal with footfall around the stall itself, so I despatched two to move down the High Street and into the Plains, calling at shops and intercepting passers-by. Both did well, but one had to finish early and the other went home feeling ill, so I finished off the task.

Nearly every shop I visited accepted leaflets, some enthusiastically. One shopkeeper, who wished to remain anonymous, told me: “My business will be finished if we don’t stop Brexit. I import a lot of stuff from the EU and taxes are bound to go up.”

The Madeleine Albright/Simon Chater Prize for Moral Numbness went to a man who said, “Brexit doesn’t bother me because I don’t

give a damn about anyone else but me.” Yes, he really said that!

We were given the usual grief about democracy. A yappy woman told us she was “disgusted” by us for not respecting the 2016 referendum result. She calmed down (a bit) when we engaged with her and seemed to listen to the points we made about the need for a supermajority, the groups left out of the franchise and the lies that, in a normally functioning democracy, would have invalidated the result. We ended up shaking hands and saying we had enjoyed the set-to.

A strange incident occurred at the end of the stall, when a community police officer came up to us. Apparently, the police had received a complaint from a member of the public who claimed that they had asked us to move on and we had refused; they had then asked Highways to move us on and we had become abusive. This rang no bells with us whatsoever and I ended up marvelling at the inventiveness of some of our Leaver detractors.

19 October 2019: London march

Our final march in London. Everywhere, the same defiance and determination.
We will never give up!





Remember Guy Fawkes?
Frustration drove him to it
We know that feeling



9 November 2019: Plymouth College of Art

Today's report can only start with our heroic volunteers, who withstood conditions that would quickly have seen off lesser mortals. Thanks to all 10 of you for putting up with the rain and wind for as long as you did.

We had timed the stall, held outside Plymouth College of Art, to coincide with the college's Open Day. The prospective students and their parents were due to come out around 4.00 to 4.30 pm and we had hoped to catch them before they headed for home.

The stall was part of our drive to remind students to register to vote if they had not already done so and to urge them to go for a postal vote if they were in any doubt where they would be on 12 December.

After we had set up, in weak sunshine, we were able to operate more or less normally for about an hour. Then the rain started, spitting at first, then coming at us sideways and hard as the wind freshened. We huddled under umbrellas (which blew inside out) and tried to keep our leaflets and sign-up cards dry while still signing up the few brave souls who were willing to stop and talk.

In these difficult conditions, there was good news: all the students I spoke with had already registered to vote and fully intended to do so. A few were grateful for the reminder that they could have a postal vote and some

were interested in choosing to vote in the more marginal of the two seats available to them – Plymouth or home.

The rain persisted and the wind picked up still more, so we decided to stop. I fetched the car and we packed up the stall, then repaired to the cafeteria just inside the college. As if to mock us, by that stage the clouds were breaking up and the sun reappeared! After a cup of tea a few of us felt brave enough to resume with clip-boards only – and so we did, standing at the entrance to the college as the light began to fail and the temperature fell. Not many students seemed to be around by this stage and few passers-by wanted to stop. We ended the day at about 4.40 pm, having achieved 22 sign-ups and handed out an unknown number of voter registration cards.



“You should not be targeting impressionable young people in this way”

14 November 2019: Exeter College

Caught in a traffic jam on the outskirts of Exeter as the first drops of heavy rain spattered on my windscreen, I began to feel gloomy about this stall – another in our series directed at young voters, this time at Exeter College. Why does it always rain on stall days!? And what were our chances of success under these conditions?

I took a “short” cut – actually a longer way round but with less traffic – through St Thomas and arrived at the college gates only fractionally late, to find two of my “stallwarts” chatting under an umbrella. Perhaps our chances weren’t so bad after all.

The rain was steady, so we dispensed with the customary table and set to work just with clipboards. The stall’s “HQ”, at the foot of the Buller statue, consisted of a soggy drape sheltering the box of leaflets, a dripping placard and a heap of drenched umbrellas! But one of our volunteers got the flags flying and we cheerfully started our work, intercepting students with a smile as they walked past. Our aim was twofold – to remind them to register to vote (postally if necessary) and to sign them up as supporters.

I was keen to place our registration reminder cards with staff inside the building. I asked a passing security guard whether this would be possible, but he took one look at the Devon for Europe branding and said “No way”. I wasn’t taking that for an answer, so I took the cards to Reception, where a friendly young woman said the college did have a policy of encouraging students to register to vote and our cards would be most welcome and could be distributed to lecturers.

Back outside, the students came in pulses, so one moment our volunteers were standing around chatting to each other and the next we were rushed off our feet, trying to catch the students as they streamed past, late for classes.

It’s always heartening meeting these bright-eyed young ones. They know we’re on their side and several thanked us for being there. This time, unlike on previous occasions, we hit the spot with 16- and 17-year-olds, finding many who didn’t know that they could register at 16 even though they could not vote until they were 18. We told them that, although they would not be able to vote in



15 November 2019: Exeter University

“What are you doing on the 12th of December?”

As a chat-up line it hardly sparkles, but it proved an effective way of starting a conversation with the students of Exeter University. Most of the young ones I tried it on immediately said they would be voting, but a few looked perplexed and said they didn’t know. Cue for me to flourish our voter registration card with the words, “You’re voting!”

Today’s stall was in the university’s Forum, a large modern building with a strong role in creating the university’s sense of community. An attractive central space is flanked by shops, cafés and offices, while staircases allow access to upper levels. Today the central space hummed with activity, with many students and staff passing through on their way to or from lectures or, in some cases, leaving for the weekend. Our joint stall with the university’s [Students for Europe](#) (ESE) group was just one in two rows of similar stalls on either side of a tree-lined central divide. We shared a single table, displaying our leaflets, stickers and sign-up cards, along with information on tactical voting. DfE and ESE banners and placards were also on show.

The logistics of parking, moving the kit into the Forum, talking through do’s and don’ts with our partner and setting up the joint stall took time, so we got off to a late start. The three volunteers from DfE were deployed in agreed positions –

one of us went outside to walk up and down Streatham Hill with a mobile stall, I stood near the stall table and accosted people coming our side of the divide, while our third volunteer did the same on the other side. The leader of the ESE team stayed seated at the table, where he was later joined by two colleagues.

This was one of the most positive stalls we have ever held. The level of awareness among the students was super-high. Nearly all were already registered to vote and most intended to vote tactically to stop Brexit. I felt our advice on how to vote in Exeter could prove decisive. Some were grateful for the reminder that they could obtain a postal vote if they were uncertain where they would be on election day.

What I love about talking with students is their openness to new ideas. They listen and change their minds as you speak. I met one young man who at first said he was indifferent to politics. “I’m good”, he said, declining my offer of a sign-up card and leaflet. He said he didn’t mind about Brexit and didn’t think anything he did could make a difference. I quoted Burke: “For evil to triumph it is sufficient only that good people do nothing.” I stamped my foot and said: “So please, don’t do nothing! This is once-in-a-lifetime stuff: your interests are threatened and it’s vital you make up your mind and nail your colours to the mast.” He immediately took the card and my pen

this general election, there might well be a PV coming soon. An amendment could be proposed to allow their age-group to vote this time round, so it was worth getting ready by registering. Plenty gratefully took the cards and promised to act on them.

As on our last visit, we detected a number of Leavers on the academic staff. One challenged us: “What are you doing here? You should not be targeting impressionable young people in this way.” I don’t understand how these so-called teachers who are supposed to be preparing young people for a working life can live with their consciences! How could they have voted to deprive their charges of the right to live, work and fall in love in 28 countries? Shame on them!

Managing an umbrella, a clipboard, sign-up cards and a pen in rain and wind isn’t easy, so of course we had our spills – cards escaped

from folders and cascaded to the ground. Most of us gave up trying to sign people up and concentrated on giving out the voter registration cards. We ended up with only 11 rain-smudged sign-up cards. But all of us felt that the effort to target young voters had paid off handsomely. And most of us were impressed by their political awareness and touched by their eagerness to take part in their first experience of democracy.

A big thank you to our seven volunteers for braving the elements. By 12.15 pm, with the rain intensifying and the wind picking up, it was time to stop. After packing up the car we went to the delightfully misnamed Dinosaur Café, which is very small but does a great line in Turkish mezze and coffee.

Tomorrow we continue our series of stalls for students in the Forum at Exeter University. What a joy to be under cover for a change!



in his hand and signed up to join us. “Thank you so much for doing something,” I said; “It really matters and it will count.” I felt like weeping for joy!

Another encounter I enjoyed was a long conversation with that rare being, a passionate yet articulate Leaver who could reason his case. He had bought into a lot of myths, including “global Britain”, the EU army, the federal Europe we’re heading for and being forced to join the Euro. He urged me to read the manifesto of the European Commission’s new President, Ursula von der Leyen. This apparently details many policies that are anathema to the UK (I don’t believe this, but he had the edge over me because he had read the manifesto and I hadn’t!) He felt strongly that our country had a lot of potential and could do better on its own. I saw for the first time how seductive these ideas are for people with even just a grain of nationalist thinking in their souls. At the end I pressed our Facts sheet into his hand and he agreed to keep studying the issues. We shook hands and said we had enjoyed talking to each other.

DfE’s relatively pro-active campaigning style attracted a lot of people to the stall. So successful were we in plugging them that ESE ran out of its sign-up cards, while DfE received 38 new sign-ups. Both partners dispensed

masses of voter registration reminders, sometimes accompanied by the leaflet on tactical voting.

Agreed ground rules are the key to running a successful joint stall. It’s important to keep the number of campaigners in the two teams roughly equal, so neither side dominates. When playing an “away” match, the visiting partner should follow the guidance of the host on any do’s and don’ts. It’s polite to secure approval to display any flags, leaflets and other branded items. The campaigning styles of the partners should also be complementary, ensuring the two teams work well together. Above all, it’s vital to have shared objectives – our No. 1 objective was the same as ESE’s: remind students of the need to register if they hadn’t already done so, of the fact that they can choose where to vote, and of the need to get a postal vote if they weren’t sure where they’d be on 12 December. Our No. 2 objective was to secure sign-ups. Here it is vital that the two partners stress the need to join the other group as well as their own. We were careful to make sure students joined ESE as well as DfE. And ESE did the same for us.

Result? A happy collaboration, to be repeated next Friday. My thanks to our two teams; we had a lot of fun together.

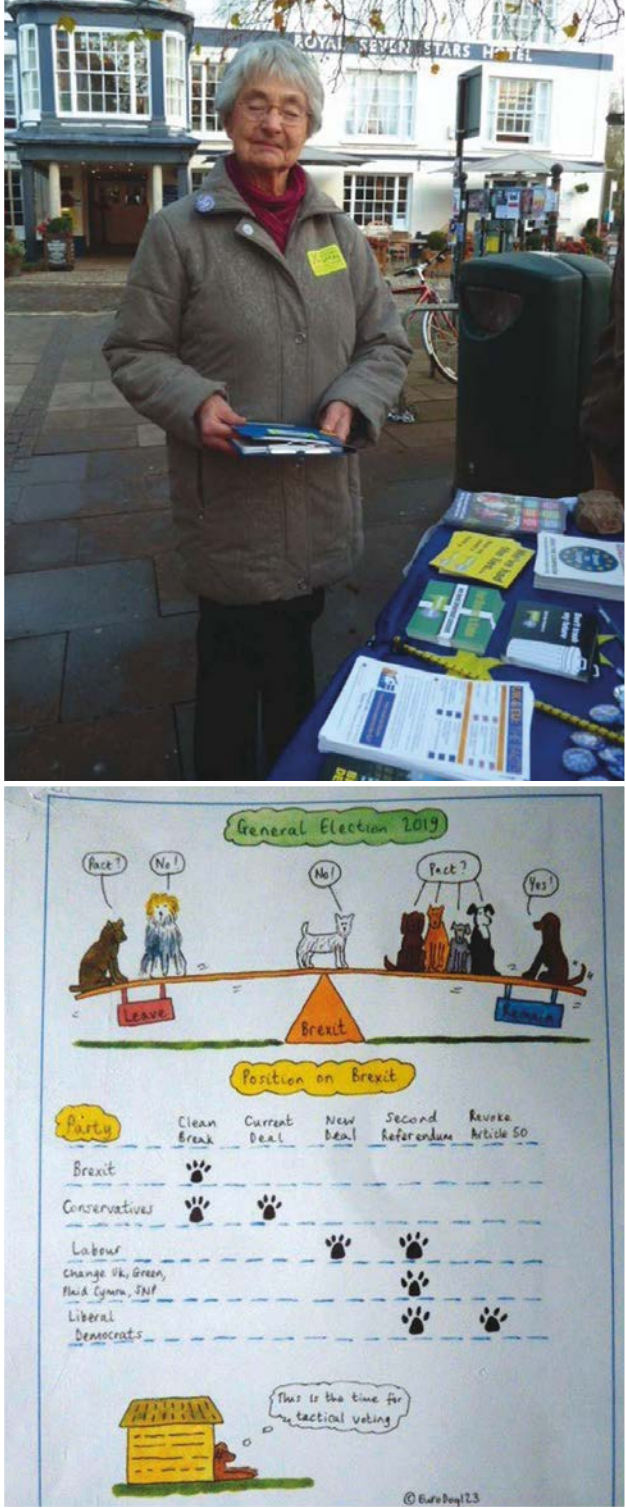
Party loyalties Can facilitate Brexit Please vote tactically

“When the facts change, I change my mind:
 what do you do, Sir?”

16 November 2019: Totnes

Tactical voting was flavour of the day at our stall in Totnes today. We set up under the trees on the Plains in cool but fine conditions – a mercy after the drenching we had taken earlier in the week. The town wasn’t crowded, but there was a steady flow of people throughout the morning. The word on tactical voting has got around and there was lively interest in DfE’s recommendations, both for Totnes and for other constituencies across the county. Lots of people already knew they were voting for Sarah Wollaston, our incumbent MP, former Tory turned Lib Dem in revolt against the lies of the 2016 Leave Campaign. But a few were confused and some branded her a turncoat. In the former case I was able to give a brief

history of Sarah’s “journey” and the reasons why she now supported a People’s Vote. These were broadly accepted, along with our voting recommendation. In the latter case I quoted John Maynard Keynes: “When the facts change, I change my mind: what do you do, Sir?” This didn’t immediately convince anyone, but it was fun to come out with and may have sowed the seeds of doubt, leading eventually to a change of heart. Our second objective, after voting recommendations, was signing people up as DfE supporters. My impression was that, compared with previous stalls, people were reluctant to take this step, preferring to hold off until after the election. In three hours of campaigning we gained only 40 new joiners, compared with a usual score in



this location of 80 to 100. We did, however, distribute lots of voter registration postcards, accompanied by our flier on tactical voting. The relatively low number of new joiners may partly reflect saturation, an increasing problem in towns where we’ve repeatedly held stalls over the past two years. We can expect a great leap forward in supporter numbers as soon as we win a People’s Vote, a likely outcome if, and only if, we can achieve a hung parliament in the coming election. We were delighted to be visited by Sarah Wollaston, who had been campaigning on a Lib Dem stall in the market place. She spent a good hour with us, talking with our volunteers and members of the public. Sarah has been a great constituency MP and we think her chances of winning the seat again, in her new incarnation as a Lib Dem, are high, provided the tactical vote comes out in force. So come on Totnesians, show your colours! And where you disagree with Sarah on other issues, hold your noses! Our volunteers, valiant as ever, were eight in number. A special word of welcome to one of our regulars, a frail older woman who was back with us after a spell in hospital and several months of convalescence. She said it was great to “come on a stall, to see everyone and to feel useful again.” Special thanks too to a first timer who instantly took to stall routines and disciplines and proved a great anchor person. A Totnesian through and through, she is the author of A Dog’s Brexit, a witty set of cartoons shortly to be printed and already available on line at <https://www.facebook.com/EuroDog123-863817647320169/>. The dog in the cartoons is the inimitable Noisette, good as gold at her owner’s feet throughout the stall.



20 November 2019: Plymouth University

Our new sandwich board adds an apocalyptic “end-of-days” flavour to our campaigning – appropriate, since we are surely in Brexit’s end-game by now.

We tried it out today outside Plymouth University. The message, on tactical voting, is timely and certainly drew attention from passers-by. But Plymouth’s frisky little breeze periodically lifted the board on one’s back, giving the uncomfortable feeling that one might become air-borne, over-the-rainbow style, at any moment! If that minor bug can be fixed, it will make an effective campaigning tool. Memo to self: bring some cord to tie it round the waist next time.

We had dispensed with tables and a leaflet display for this stall, due to a shortage of volunteers. But the five of us who came were able to operate using the mobile trays or simply handing materials out. We plugged voter registration and tactical voting, intercepting students as they came and went for lectures. As on previous occasions, it was clear that nearly everyone was registered to vote. Advice on tactical voting was gratefully received and we were able to recommend Luke Pollard to many who were curious to know who to vote for in Plymouth Sutton and Devonport. Who knows, perhaps we’ll have influenced the result enough to ensure he keeps his seat.

We received no abuse, but plenty of students are still indifferent, dismissing our offer of leaflets and cards with an “I’m good, thanks”. To which I reply, “You won’t be, not if the Tories get in” – but no one heeds my warning.

Besides handing out hundreds of cards and leaflets we obtained 24 sign-ups. However, as on other stalls recently I felt people were reluctant to join during the election campaign.

This was a car-boot stall! After unloading at our usual spot, I saw no reason to move the car to a fee-paying car park. Having the car close at hand was great for accessing additional campaigning materials when needed. The open boot, complete with dog-basket, also made a perfect resting place for our “Eurodog” Noisette, who doubtless savoured the smell of the basket’s normal occupant, a handsome male labrador named Topaz. Noisette didn’t want to climb out when we had finished, but we told her all good things come to an end.

Early rain cleared, then the temperature fell like a stone. We stopped at 12.30 pm and went to the nearby Caffeine Club for warming meals and interesting talk. A good day, thanks to our four volunteers, not to forget the inimitable Noisette, our lucky mascot.

What's Brexit to me?

A sharp, poisonous hack-saw Slicing through my head

"You're spoiling the atmosphere"

23 November 2019: Brixham

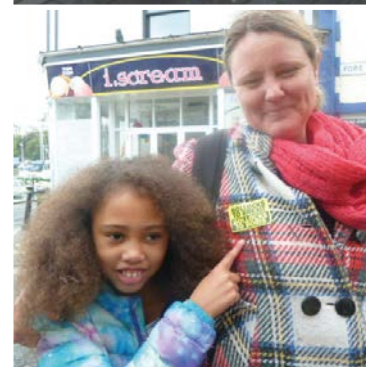
Brixham today reflected the acute polarization of opinion in our country as it buckles and fractures under the strain of Brexit.

At times it felt as if we were on enemy territory. No one showed us physical violence, but plenty of Leavers were angry and aggressive while the majority displayed a sullen indifference. Yet we also had many rich conversations and lots of interest in tactical voting.

Our stall was timed to coincide with the run-up to the town's annual Lights, Lanterns and 'Luminations' parade, a popular event that attracts young families. We ran a table stall on the Quayside, opposite the redoubtable Bullers Arms. And we had enough volunteers to form a phalanx of three roaming further afield with trays and a sandwich board – up Fore Street in one direction and further along the Quay in the other.

Let me tell you about a few encounters that illustrate the polarity. The first young man I met said "Of course!" when I asked him if he wanted to stop Brexit. He signed up to join us and gratefully took our leaflet with its scribbled recommendation to vote for Sarah Wollaston. So too did a couple of other young men who had recently moved to Brixham, plus a woman from Portsmouth who had also newly settled in the town. "It's very different here," she said, indicating her dawning awareness of local anti-EU sentiment.

We handed out lots of leaflets with Sarah Wollaston written in as the choice for Totnes and several more with Lee Howgate for Torbay. A Labour voter said he would "hold his nose" and



vote Lib Dem. We also gained 16 new sign-ups, though it was clear that people were reluctant to join during the election campaign.

In contrast, Leavers brushed us off brusquely or traded insults in the middle of the street. We were called traitors, of course – the label I find most hurtful because of its denial that we too want what is best for our country. Immigration came up in several blatantly racist encounters, one with a couple from Leicester who accused me of wanting to "flood" our country with immigrants. I had several feisty exchanges with people who dismissed as "Rubbish" my assertion that the government is refusing to release a report that may well demonstrate Russian interference in the 2016 referendum. Telling such people they've been lied to still isn't

working and I am stunned and dismayed by the persistence of the hard-core Leave vote in the face of mounting evidence that Brexit is a fraud. When will the light dawn?

Worst of all was friendly fire from a gaggle of Labour supporters standing a few yards from our stall. They were dressed up to look Christmassy, but there wasn't much Christmas spirit about them. They accused the Lib Dems of robbing them of a Labour victory in this constituency, rebuffed my attempts to engage them in debate about tactical voting and refused to be photographed. Not much peace on earth likely with that lot... If the Tories get back in, locally as nationally, it is the rift between Labour and the Lib Dems that will be to blame.



One encounter left me feeling distraught. It was with a local Englishman, his Filipina wife and their two young children. He had voted Leave in 2016 but had since suffered a rude awakening as the Home Office threatened to deport his wife. Because his wife is not allowed to work he is currently holding down two jobs while dealing with and paying the solicitors defending his case. He told me he would vote for whoever offers the best deal on immigration. “That could mean voting Tory,” he said, arguing that reduced immigration from the EU could leave more room for Asians and Africans. I said it would be unwise to appease the far right, as they are never satisfied. If the Tories come to power again, the hostile environment is likely to persist and worsen, and the hypothetical dividend for non-EU immigration is unlikely to materialize. If this man succumbs to the “divide and rule” strategy of the Tories, what hope can we have for our country?

After two hours of this sort of thing, it was a relief to come across a lovely couple on the Quayside who smiled and showed sympathy when I told them about the abuse we receive and how sickening it is to be called a traitor. Their kindness revived me.

Minutes later a man accompanied by his wife and children stuck two fingers up at me and told me I was “spoiling the atmosphere”. I took this in my stride and wished him and his family a delightful afternoon (demonstrating that he was the misery-guts, not me). It was, though, clear that bringing politics into the fun-of-the-fair atmosphere of Brixham during this event had been a risk – a conclusion confirmed by sentiment among the other volunteers when the three of us returned to the main stall. It turned out complaints about our presence had been posted online with the town council. After a brief discussion, as daylight failed and the first lights, lanterns and ‘luminations went live, we decided to pack up and go.

My take-away feeling was that we have a long way to go before we can even begin to heal the wounds in our society. They are deep and painful; they continue to bleed profusely; and the loss of blood is weakening our country, perhaps fatally.

How ironic that a small seaside town’s festival of light should trigger such dark thoughts.

Putin, Trump, Johnson If they have their way will be The new World Order

29 November 2019: Exeter

This was an experimental stall. We had decided to travel light, dispensing with our table and using mobile stalls only, carrying a restricted range of leaflets, stickers and badges. The idea was to mingle with and follow the Exeter Strike for Climate rally and march, and to concentrate on a single basic message aimed at the largely young marchers: vote tactically on 12 December.

What I hadn’t reckoned with was the traffic on Black Friday, the year’s busiest shopping day. I and my helper got to the drop-off point in time and deposited the trays close to Carluccio’s in Bedford Street – our chosen “HQ” for this operation. But parking in the city centre proved next to impossible, so by the time the stall was due to begin I was still in a queue of cars, waiting to try my third car-park. My colleague from East Devon, co-leader of our Exeter stalls, came to the rescue and launched the stall in my absence, sending

our team out two by two: one carrying the tray and a “shadow” whose job was to keep close and make sure they were safe. A point person had the lucky job of staying warm in Carluccio’s, minding the stack of spare leaflets and reserving our table for the lunch together that had also been billed as part of the day.

Our approach proved largely successful. One of our volunteers said afterwards, “This is the most impact I’ve ever had on a DfE stall.” All of us reported handing out lots of leaflets on tactical voting and providing plenty of advice on who to vote for. Behind the collection tin on each tray I had tucked a crib-sheet on DfE’s recommended choice of candidate for each constituency. This was frequently consulted and the right name scribbled onto the leaflet before it was handed over.

Another ploy that worked well was to display our new tactical voting sticker prominently. This attracted lots of attention, bringing many



people over to obtain advice along with stickers and badges.

Most people already knew about tactical voting. We noted lots of support for Ben Bradshaw in Exeter, a strong voice for the People's Vote, and also for Claire Wright, East Devon's Independent candidate, widely seen as a breath of fresh air. We met a few people mulling over their choice in Totnes and South Hams – and left them in no doubt as to our recommendation.

Sign-ups were a secondary objective and we brought in 21 new joiners. As on other stalls recently, many people seemed reluctant to join while the general election was under way. There was also a lot of indifference, with many intent only on Christmas shopping.

We met some security guards who rock! Most of us were told, gently but firmly, that we shouldn't be canvassing in the Princesshay shopping precinct, which is privately owned. When my colleague and I were "apprehended" and asked to move to the nearest piece of public pavement, we readily agreed. Then I said, cheekily, "While I've got you, would you be interested in joining Devon for Europe?" "Unfortunately I can't, Sir, not while I'm in uniform," came the reply. Then, leaning closer and whispering, "But I'm with you all the way." I encouraged him to join when he got home and he surreptitiously pocketed a leaflet before we parted company.

A few Leavers voiced their objections, calling us undemocratic. I met one angry man who said I was a disgrace to our country. Instead of masking my own anger in response, as I usually do, I decided this time to show it. So I let rip, ending, "Neither you nor any of your like are going to strip me of my citizenship, my rights and my identity as a European. I will not have it!" My raw feeling took him aback and he looked quite shaken. Perhaps I gave him pause for thought. It certainly prompted me to think that, sometimes, expressing our anger is the right thing to do – but it must be well reined in and controlled.

Our overall take on the day was that, despite the Tory lead in the polls, this election is too close to call. If we can break through with the message on tactical voting, victory could be ours. But can we do it? It was discouraging to feel that, despite over three hours of work by 10 volunteers, we had barely scratched the surface in terms of reaching people in sufficient numbers to make a real difference. Perhaps our touring digi-van, due to take to the streets next week, will do the trick.

My thanks, as ever, to our loyal volunteers. Afterwards, at Carluccio's, we enjoyed comparing notes on the day as we warmed up over Italian food and hot drinks.



“I’m voting Conservative, to get Brexit done”

30 November 2019: Plymouth

An elderly woman told me I should say my prayers.

“I do,” I said. “I praise Allah every day of my life.”

“Ah,” she said, knowingly. “That’s the problem, isn’t it?”

“What is?”

“Allah.”

“Allah is Magnificent!” I proclaimed. “He is Merciful and Compassionate, the Beautiful, the Kind, the Unique, the one who is Whole and at Peace.”

By this time she had probably dismissed me as a nutcase or a wannabe terrorist. At any rate we spoke no further, as I turned away to find someone more interesting to talk with.

It’s amazing how quickly you can expose bigotry, warped beliefs and simple-mindedness in the people you meet on our streets. And how quickly you can come to be suspected, even accused, of those things yourself! If you put your mind to it, that is. And have your tongue firmly in your cheek.

It seems to me that when orthodox religious faith is in retreat, as it is in our country at present, perverse forms of religion spring up to take its place. Nature abhors a vacuum; people have to have some belief system to cling to,

however daft. Arguably, Brexit is a textbook case of this – which explains why it is so difficult to defeat. Facts simply don’t cut it; the true believer is allergic to them. And round the central belief crowd all sorts of secondary misconceptions.

Whatever you make of my thoughts on the matter, fruit-loopery of one kind or another abounded on the streets of Plymouth this Saturday afternoon. One man told me that the EU was “Hitler’s dream come true”, the German conquest of Europe by other means. Another railed against corruption and the fact that EU accounts had not been signed off for 25 years – utter nonsense, but an article of misplaced faith among many Leavers. Finally, an old man stood beside our stall and let off steam for fully 10 minutes, jabbing with his finger as he ranted to anyone who would listen about our country “letting in murderers”. We gathered he was referring to the previous day’s attack on London Bridge, allegedly committed by a man of Pakistani descent from Stoke on Trent. So there was a tenuous connection to reality, but it was nothing to do with the EU.

These were the incidents that, for me, stood out against a background of mass indifference. People swirled past our stall, on their way to and from the Drake Circus shopping arcade.

Most were on Christmas shopping auto-pilot, intent on Black Friday bargains which continued into the weekend. Seldom did anyone show any interest, and often then only to dismiss us. One man said he was voting Conservative, “to get Brexit done”. His mindless regurgitation of Mr Johnson’s mendacious slogan went without challenge, as he was gone before we could engage him and tell him that no, it wouldn’t be, that this was the biggest lie of all. Another, when we challenged him, said “F*** off” over his shoulder as he swept on.

Our day in Plymouth got off to a more relaxed start than we had planned. On convening, at 9.30 am, we learned that many politicians, local MP Luke Pollard included, had suspended campaigning as a mark of respect for the two victims of Friday’s terror attack on London Bridge. So we started our day with an agreeable social hour at Costa’s. Then a group of us walked over to Labour’s Plymouth campaign headquarters to say hello and get advice on what to do. There we enjoyed second cups of tea and talk before learning that campaigning would re-start at midday. So we walked back, unloaded the kit and launched our stall, with a reduced but still viable team, at about 12.30 pm.

We kept going until 4.00 pm. It was a long slog, but the rain that had been forecast held off apart from a brief shower, which we all

took without complaint, stamping our feet to ward off the chill. Our persistence paid off. Despite the widespread indifference, we handed out lots of leaflets on tactical voting and advised plenty of people on the choices for Plymouth. A display board with these proved an excellent tool. We will have made a small but perhaps crucial difference to the vote, especially among younger voters, who were keen to get our advice. By the time we stopped we had 40 sign-ups, not a bad haul. And all in all not a bad result for the day as a whole, considering the prevailing mood of indifference punctuated by lunacy.

My sincere thanks to our wonderfully sane team of volunteers. One day the lunacy will abate and our streets will be walked by civilized people again. Inch Allah, say I!



My local MP Racist zealous xenophobe Tory voters’ choice

“You are slowly changing public opinion in our town”

6 December 2019: Newton Abbot

In tactical voting as in budget cuts, if it isn’t hurting it isn’t working.

If your “natural” vote coincides with the tactical vote in your constituency, you won’t feel a thing when you put your cross in the box. But if you have to “hold your nose” and vote against your instincts, that’s painful. It’s also likely to be effective: these are the votes that change outcomes.

Yesterday we were in Newton Abbot, urging people to vote tactically to unseat the incumbent Tory, Anne Marie Morris – surely one of the most reactionary, and by now unpopular, MPs in the country. Judging by the reactions I saw, I’d say we’re in with a chance.

We were sufficiently numerous to give the town good coverage. Our double-table stall in the pedestrian precinct was complemented by two mobile stalls, run by paired volunteers

who ranged more widely. Our sandwich board also went walk-about.

The recommended tactical vote in this constituency is for the Lib Dem candidate, Martin Wrigley. We met plenty of disaffected former Tories for whom the switch to Lib Dem came relatively easily. Fairly or unfairly, the Lib Dems are perceived as right of centre at present, mainly because of their record in office with the Cameron government. For voters with Labour sympathies the choice was harder. I met one woman who acted out the business of holding her nose as I stood and talked with her. I helped her come to terms with her decision to vote Lib Dem by saying it was “just this once” – and that normal tribal allegiances can resume after this election.

You can also persuade waverers if you stress that people are voting for a local MP, not for

a Prime Minister. If tactical voting works, the likely outcome will be a hung Parliament. Jeremy Corbyn might well become our leader, but he will be held in check by the Lib Dems and other small parties.

Vote swapping is another approach that can win people over, especially in constituencies with strong tribal rivalries. One of our volunteers reported some success with this.

The long slow shift from Leave to Remain continues. I met a former nurse who had voted Leave in 2016 but told me she was now “open to argument”. She was aghast at the shortfall in NHS nursing staff, which she said was now 43,000. So far she had held back from changing her mind because “no one has a crystal ball, no one knows what will happen.” “Oh yes we do know,” I replied. “We know from two sources: what’s happened in the past – what history tells us – and what’s happening now.” I went on to say that the history of Germany in the 1930s and 40s is an object lesson in the fate of countries that embrace right-wing populism. Such projects always promise the earth, but deliver the exact opposite – national humiliation and



disgrace in Germany’s case. And in the UK today, inward investment has fallen off a cliff-edge, boding ill for jobs and incomes in the future, while EU doctors and nurses are leaving the country in droves. “Doesn’t that give you pause for thought?” I asked. “Yes it does,” she answered. Then she said she found it “really scary” to think that, by voting tactically, she might help Corbyn come to power. But she took away our Facts leaflet and said she would reflect on a change of heart – and a tactical vote on 12 December.

Newton Abbot felt different yesterday. There was less abuse and people were in a more reflective mood. “No one was rude to me,” said one of our regular volunteers, a note



of surprise in his voice. Our campaigning was, however, marred by one incident that demonstrated the strain caused by this Brexit election and the need to step away from stressful encounters. We apologize to all who were affected and are taking measures to ensure it doesn’t happen again.

The best news of the day came from a local supporter who told me that, by coming back to Newton Abbot time and again, always with the same messages, we are slowly changing public opinion in the town. Drip-feeding works!

I relayed this encouraging take on our progress to the team, who seemed visibly cheered by it. On any one day it is easy to feel disappointed in a place like Newton Abbot. We seem barely to scratch the surface in terms of winning people to our cause – and in fact we gained only 16 new supporters on this occasion. But look back over time and you see a much bigger change.

Sign-up card by sign-up card, we are building a mass movement. Conversation by conversation, we are winning hearts and minds. A huge swell is building.





"Your campaign is a distraction; the climate emergency is much more important"

9 December 2019: Totnes

On the day that two former Prime Ministers from rival political traditions – John Major and Tony Blair – came together to urge tactical voting to defeat Mr Johnson's extreme right-wing Tories, we returned to Totnes for a final day of campaigning for Sarah Wollaston of the Lib Dems, the tactical voting choice for the Totnes and South Hams constituency.

Our day got off to a chaotic start. Held up by rain and heavy traffic on market day, I arrived a bit late but managed to slip into the last available unloading bay beside the market, thinking I could simply cross the road with our kit to set up in our usual spot under the arcade. But a couple of buskers were already in possession! So we de-camped to a less favourable spot on the corner of High Street and North Street. Here there was less footfall and we were more exposed to the rain and wind, which hampered our efforts for the first hour or so. Then the rain cleared and, given a good number of volunteers, we were able to deploy two people with one of our mobile trays, plus an additional pair on leafleting.

This meant that, despite a delayed start, we had good coverage of the town – the mobile contingent went twice up and down the High Street and round both sides of the Plains. Later I went with the other tray up into the Narrows. Our tactical voting sandwich board

also enjoyed another outing. Meanwhile, we had enough remaining volunteers to manage the table stall, which attracted a small but steady flow of visitors.

The Totnes constituency is a microcosm of the challenges that beset tactical voting nationwide, given that the Remain vote is split. The Greens have graciously stood aside to allow a clear run to defeat the Tories, but Labour have mounted a fierce challenge to the Lib Dems.

We met plenty of Labour supporters who cannot accept the idea of voting Lib Dem. Broadly, they are of two kinds.

The first kind consists of idealists who are reluctant to vote tactically because they vote with their hearts not their heads. They dismiss the Lib Dems as Tories in disguise, citing Sarah's long record of voting with the government on repressive measures such as the bedroom tax.

Our response was to say "Think of the future, not the past, and value Sarah's strong performance as a constituency MP, her experience as a parliamentarian, and in particular her contributions to cross-party debate on health and care issues, where she has been a strong voice for reform and for additional funds." For idealists unable to "hold

their noses” and vote Lib Dem, we urged vote swapping as the solution.

The second group contains those who don’t believe that the Lib Dems really are the tactical vote in this constituency because evidence “on the doorstep” suggests Labour will win. These are egged on, mischievously, by a key voice in the local Green movement as well as by the Labour candidate and campaigners.

Who to believe? Does it really make sense to believe the Labour Party faithful? Such voices are hardly objective. The strength of the Devon for Europe “choice” is precisely that it isn’t our choice but is based on objective analysis across all the tactical voting sites.

We handed out masses of tactical voting leaflets. We also had lots of interesting conversations, but so much is at stake in this election that even friendly Totnes seemed edgier than usual. This is, I think, mainly because of the rift between Labour and Lib Dem supporters, but other issues are also bubbling away.

For the first time since Extinction Rebellion came into being, I met a climate change activist who attacked our stance on the EU. He told me our campaign was a waste of time, a distraction, that the climate emergency was much more important. He rejected the idea that the UK’s contribution to emissions is relatively small and that, through the EU, we can add to

the pressure on much bigger polluters such as India, China and Brazil. I cited the recent Brazil case, in which the EU had suspended trade negotiations in order to force the President to take action to put out the Amazon fires. His only response to this was that my generation had “trashed the planet”. I found his assumptions insulting and told him that, actually, he had no idea how I had spent my life and what my beliefs and actions were. Luckily at that point another volunteer came to my rescue and took over the conversation. She managed to defuse the situation and told me later that they had parted on friendly terms.

The lesson? I was on the receiving end of aggressive campaigning of the kind that some of us, myself included, occasionally dish out to others. And I could see how ineffective it was!

Sign-ups have fallen off dramatically since the start of the election campaign. Despite being a large team we gained only eight, but quite a few people took away our generic leaflet so that they could have a look at our website once they reached home.

One final stall still to come, in Exeter on Wednesday, and then we must await our fate. According to the polls, other parties are closing on the Tories. We live in hope they are right. Word on the street suggests they could be, but only if the people defy the habitual tribalism of our politicians. Tactical voting is vital!



“The reason why you don’t want a second referendum is that you’re afraid of losing. **That’s** what’s truly undemocratic”

11 December 2019: Exeter

Our “last stand” – the final street stall before the general election – took place in Exeter today.

Over 20 volunteers had signed up to come to the stall, a magnificent finale to our epic struggle to defeat Brexit. With these numbers we were able to adopt a two-pronged attack on the city centre, with one table stall at our usual location in Princesshay, led by a colleague from East Devon, and another near the Guildhall, further down the High Street, which I led. Besides the two table stalls, “wandering” volunteers with mobile trays and the sandwich board made intermittent forays up and down the High and into side streets.

It wasn’t just the quantity of volunteers that made this stall special but also their quality. In bitter cold and slanting rain verging on sleet, they not

only stayed in position but opted to continue for another hour as the light faded. I have never come across a more dedicated group of campaigners and I felt once again what an astonishing effort Devon for Europe is. Thank you all!

Amongst the public, we met the usual heroes and villains – and not a few who sought simply to wind us up. “I’m going to vote Nazi,” said one man, grinning wickedly as he passed us. Do such people know what they are saying?

A classic divided couple from East Devon came my way – both had voted Leave in 2016; he had since changed his mind, she had not. I warned her to be careful what she wished for and that fascism was always popular in its early stages and seldom recognized for what it

is. The warning signs are there: attacks on the judiciary and the media, both planned if Johnson regains power. They accepted a few stickers and she took away a Facts leaflet. I sensed she was “on the turn” – and begged her to vote Independent, not Tory, tomorrow.

Many Exeter voters knew about tactical voting and didn’t need a leaflet with Ben Bradshaw’s name written in. Out-of-towners were less sure, and we dispensed plenty of recommendations for Clare Wright in East Devon and Martin Wrigley in Newton Abbot, among others. Alarming, one of our volunteers met at least two Exeter couples who said they would vote Green because “Ben Bradshaw will romp home, so we can vote with our hearts.” Potentially a fatal mistake – repeating in miniature the 2016 vote to leave, much of which was a protest made without any expectation of winning.

One man gave me an interesting reflection. He said that conditions in the UK today were like those preceding the Arab spring – no opportunities for young people. He thought that, if Brexit goes through, they might well rise up. In other words, we’d finally get the revolution we’ve been talking about since the late 1960s.

I ended the day with a splendid hammer-and-tongs argument with a couple. “Why don’t you respect the 2016 referendum result?” he asked. I said, “It’s complicated, but if you’re prepared to listen, I’ll explain.” He said, “It’s very simple, we voted out.” I then tried to explain, but every

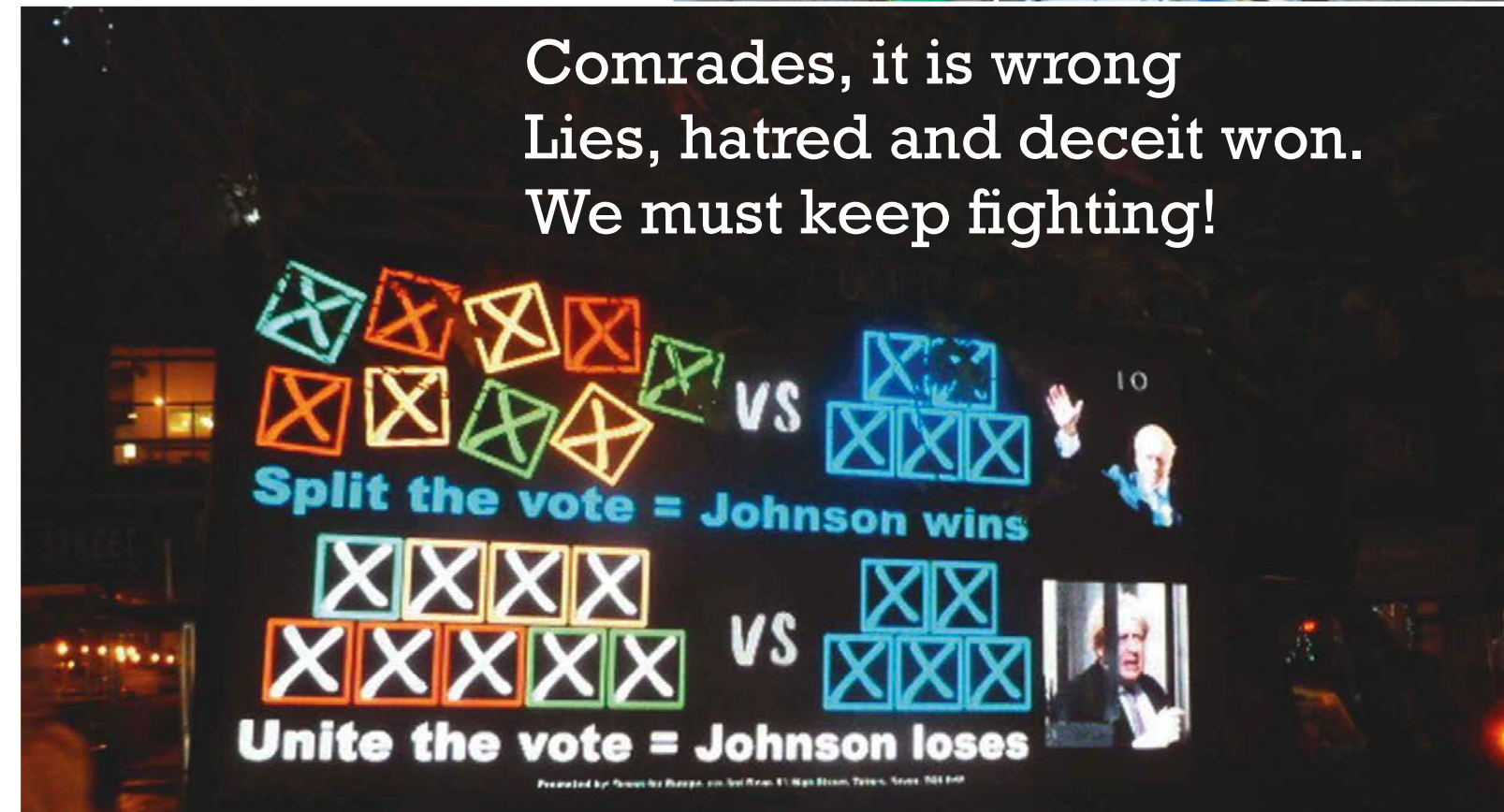
time I made a point he interrupted. Finally I said, “You don’t really want to know, so I’m going to stop talking with you.” At which point his partner entered the fray with an aggressive attack on my lack of respect for the “will of the people”. Both sides debated passionately, talking over each other and at close range. Yet both kept their tempers and, as we went on, I saw they were grinning. So I grinned back. Eventually, I believe I managed to get across the idea of a super-majority and that a 52 to 48% result for a change of this magnitude does not cut it. Also the fact that Parliament nodded through a simple majority on the basis that the referendum was advisory only. And that 16- to 18-year-olds hadn’t had a vote, when it was their future that was at stake. I ended up: “The reason why you don’t want a second referendum is that you’re afraid of losing. That’s what’s truly undemocratic.” That gave them pause for thought. We parted company after agreeing we had enjoyed the exchanges despite the tough words, with a hand-shake and mutual wishes for a great Christmas. Who knows, perhaps he’ll google “super-majority” when he gets home.

We gained 20 new supporters in just short of four hours. Engagement on the part of the public was intermittent, with many interested only in Christmas shopping. But people continued to stop to talk with us until the bitter end. At 3.50 pm, with the light fading, we decided to pack up. We joined the Princesshay team at Tea on the Green, then, at the top of South Street, greeted the return of the digi-van from its travels round the county.

The past three years has brought me a roller-coaster emotional life – riding high one moment and in the depths of despair the next. Besides my loving wife and family, what has sustained me above all else is the practical and moral support of the South Devon stalls team and the broader DfE community, online as well as in the flesh. You have been magnificent! Thank you all so much.



**Comrades, it is wrong
Lies, hatred and deceit won.
We must keep fighting!**



Disengagement

So, we agreed last month
the theme for January's piece was 'resolutions'
engendering immediate thoughts –
I don't believe in them!

(But since, have polished shoes
and tidied shelves, so must).

The further thoughts are far more difficult
confused, half-formed
involving looking inwards, honestly
appraising life-long attitudes
planning not just now, but future time
a new identity?

A year ago, you see was easy
to fight with new-found friends our country's way
but now that cause seems lost
(for the time being)
they want to campaign still, but do I have
the energy
or even, dare I say it, motivation
commitment, I don't know

And anyway, worse threats are evident
the fires! the floods! the 'leave it to the children to sort out'

My instinct is to let go
I've always watched the news, but now
look for another channel, that's a start

The human world surrounds itself
contented, it appears,
with greed and arrogant fictions
I should no longer care maybe, but how
to change the way I've always felt inside
to learn inertia, resignation, 'going with the flow'
to leave the sink-hole of involvement
without a crippling guilt?

However, negativity's a waste
so, saving precious time and consciousness
from anger, worry, grief, disgust, I'll try
to pity, not to scorn
all those who problem-solve through conflict –
in fact I'll give them little thought at all;
for who am I to sit in moral judgement?

Instead
to value family and friends in better ways
to ramble in my garden and the countryside
to fill my life with music, art, the written word
philosophies, discoveries

To re-engage, appreciate and celebrate
what's undeniably meaningful.
That is what I'll do
that's what my racing brain
tells me I have to do

But oh it is so hard... too hard... to walk away!

Loran Waite, Devon for Europe volunteer

Our volunteers

★ Aaron Nolan
★ Adam Dadeby
★ Alan Ray-Jones
★ Alan Urdaibay
★ Alex Belcher
★ Alex Pilkington
★ Alex Scott
★ Alison Blair
★ Alison Stone
★ Andrew Robertson
★ Andy Nicholls
★ Andy Swain
★ Andy Watson
★ Angela Anderson
★ Ann Hallett
★ Anna Andrews
★ Anna Marie Dick
★ Andy Wallace
★ Anne Henriksen
★ Annie Hornshaw
★ Annie Mitchell
★ Anthea Simmons
★ Barbie Nolan
★ Barry Clark
★ Barry Lunt
★ Barry Whittles
★ Brandon Malloch
★ Brenda Jones
★ Brian Rees
★ Brian Taylor
★ Brian Willan

★ Bruce Robinson
★ Carol Law
★ Carol Zollo
★ Caroline Moxley
★ Caroline Voaden
★ Celia Naish
★ Charles Cole
★ Charlie Invermee
★ Charlotte Smith
★ Chris Day
★ Chris Gethin
★ Chris Gray
★ Christine Chittock
★ Christo Skelton
★ Clare Bishop
★ Claudio Dos Santos
★ Cliff Rebbeck
★ Dan Clemence
★ Darren Hole
★ Darren Sutton
★ David Bailey
★ David Butler
★ David Harrison
★ David Love
★ David Palk
★ David Pearce
★ David Pugh
★ David Robinson
★ Debbie Thomas
★ Declan Stones
★ Derek Smithers

★ Des Maisey
★ Dominic Clemence
★ Don Frampton
★ Douglas Koszerek
★ Ed McGovern
★ Elizabeth Lancaster-Thomas
★ Elizabeth Smith
★ Emily Dommett
★ Emma Brown
★ Erica Aslett
★ Femke Nijse
★ Fiona McPhail
★ Fiona Ross
★ Felix Brett
★ Flis Bluemel
★ Gay Smith
★ Geoff Horne
★ Gill Sathanandan
★ Helen Fairhurst
★ Helen King
★ Helen Mancino
★ Helen Sargent
★ Helen Taylor
★ Howard Cotton
★ Hugh James
★ Ian McDonald
★ Ilan Jones
★ Imogen Ellis
★ James Chater
★ James Hamilton

★ Jan Young
★ Janet Jones
★ Jennie Hazell
★ Jennie Osbourne
★ Jenny Evans
★ Jenny Hall
★ Jenny Storeman
★ Jenny Willan
★ Jeremy Hall
★ Joanna Wallwork
★ John Burgess
★ John Hadley
★ John Lund
★ John Munford
★ John Skutch
★ Judy Edwards
★ Julian Andrews
★ Julian Brazil
★ Julie Gregory
★ Juliette Collier
★ Kate Macfadyen
★ Keith Selmes
★ Keith Smith
★ Kim Fewtrell
★ Kit Buckley
★ Liam Hallows
★ Lily Mason
★ Linda Regan
★ Lindsey Paton
★ Lindsey Stewart
★ Loran Waite
★ Louis Phillips
★ Lucy Whittles

★ Lynn Alderson
★ Maggie Yard
★ Margaret Pickering
★ Marguerite Pritchard
★ Marie Chadwick
★ Marie-Gabrielle Chater
★ Marion Pritchard
★ Mark Wise
★ Marta Menendez Gonzalez
★ Martin Ruder
★ Matthew White
★ Mathew Wills
★ Maurice Chittock
★ Mei Lim
★ Mick Carter
★ Mick Crane
★ Mike Baldwin
★ Mike Johnson
★ Mike Ritson
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★ Mirabel Huang-Smith
★ Monica King
★ Neil Brooks
★ Nicolas Chater
★ Nick Ford
★ Nick Ireland
★ Nick Scales
★ Niko von Engelhardt
★ Norah Baxter
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★ Paul Taylor
★ Pauline Rayner
★ Penny Maisey
★ Pete Watton
★ Peter Barker
★ Peter Sturdgess
★ Philip Fairweather
★ Phil Wilson
★ Pippa Unwin
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★ Sani Tamang
★ Sapphire Henriksen
★ Sarah Roberts
★ Sarah Tuhill
★ Sian Kinrade
★ Simon Chater

Still
European

join us
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The logo is a circular emblem with a blue background and twelve yellow stars arranged in a circle. The words "Devon for Europe" are written in white text across the center of the circle.