

We have to learn a better song, and sing it fast

Published: January 13, 2026, 7:10 am

I find myself asking what I know this morning.

I posted a video yesterday in which George Monbiot suggested that we base our lives on the stories we tell. I think this is true. One reason I have for writing ruggs blog is to work out just what the narrative of my life might be. I would suggest that all of us, in our different ways, do this all the time.

At times like the present it is harder to work out what the stories on which we build what we think we know might be. If there is an observation on which most could agree at present it is that we are living in extraordinary times.

We have a prime minister in name only. He cannot command the House of Commons. He cannot call an election. He has wilfully destroyed any chance of having a parliamentary majority. He has torn his own party asunder. And he wilfully says he will not comply with the law. Everything we have been used to as norms of behaviour has been torn to shreds.

But it's worse than that. We know he is a pathological liar. Once it was just bent bananas. Only recently it was a claim that he builds model buses. Both were so obviously fabricated and yet offered as the truth that it was ridiculous that the purveyor of such tales might be believed. But now he is Prime Minister. And the lies go on.

He claims to be negotiating with Brussels. He glaringly obviously is not.

He says we will leave the EU on 31 October but it is now clear that this is very unlikely indeed.

He claims we are ready for No Deal. Nothing can prepare us for a shock of that sort - even if the hit is only 5.5% of GDP as Mark Carney now suggests.

But worse, he even claims there is such a thing as No Deal, when very obviously that is also not true. It is impossible for any country to trade without an agreement with its neighbours. 'No Deal' as described by Boris Johnson simply means defaulting to the

worst deal possible. It does not mean there will be no deal. That's a lie.

An even bigger lie is that his No Deal will resolve matters. It does instead mean starting negotiation all over again from scratch, from the worst possible position.

Wise people know this. They're saying it as well. And many are paying the price for it, at least in England. In other constituent countries of the UK there may be more sense on this. But in England it seems that many are willing to believe Johnson, even as his party collapses around him.

This may be the hardest part of all this to accept. How is it that the Tories still have an opinion poll lead when there is every sign to anyone with any sense - and I am including Amber Rudd in that list this morning, so it's a broad church - that what Johnson is doing is not just profoundly wrong, but blatantly undeliverable in any meaningful sense?

I am not presuming that those people who think 'we must just leave' are stupid. They're not. But they are misinformed. They have built narratives peddled to them by those with deep pockets and a willingness to lie that this is an option that is in their best interests, even though it is not. And whilst they are used to all politicians lying to some degree - of which they are quite aware - they are not used to posh, rich men who they think to be people of honour (although the evidence for that is scarce) doing so as blatantly as Johnson does. Farage just paved the way for him on this path. And so they suspend their judgement. In the hierarchical society that the UK still, regrettably, is these are the people who are followed, over trench tops a century or so ago, and into the economic abyss now.

What is the solution? George Monbiot is right. It's a new story. Femi Oluwole said much the same in Ely yesterday at a People's Vote meeting of those wanting to stay in the EU. We have to learn a better song, and sing it fast.

The message is not hard to work out. It is that our leadership has failed us, on many sides. But that we the people do want to co-exist with our neighbours, because we do know we are better when cooperating, and we do know that we have more in common than divides us, whilst recognising that we are not all alike and do not wish to be so. We do therefore want to have a relationship with Europe based on mutual trust, the ability to trade and to move between our countries which does, however, respect our differences and lets all make decisions that reflect the fact that those differences are real, but must not be used as a means to oppress others. It's really not hard. It's really what most people want. It reflects the great realisation of most troops in most wars throughout history, which is that the other side is much more like them than it is different. It is about community, hope and respect. It is about us, and not the stories told to us by those seeking to manipulate opinions for gain.

But is that a story that can be told between now and November, when an election is likely? I wish I thought that possible.

I am not sure I do.

I still fear the abyss built on the lies of many of which Johnson has become the exemplar.

There are better stories to tell. My concern is that they will not be heard.

Changing that is a task to come. Its day will come. Truth does always out. But right now it's very clear it is not.