

The day Nigel Farage feared an assassin was to blame for his Volvo wheel coming loose on the M-way and why his security team always carry an anti-acid attack kit

IN yesterday's extract from Lord Ashcroft's meticulously sourced biography of Nigel Farage, we revealed the Establishment's attempts to destroy his credibility. Today, we address those rumours from his school days...

By LORD ASHCROFT

IT WAS the night before Donald Trump's inauguration as US president last year and among the political and business glitterati gathered in a Washington hotel for a party was Nigel Farage, who had by now become a personal friend of the president. Also there were Labour peer Lord Glasman, and a man called Kurt Volker, who served as US special representative for Ukraine during Trump's first administration.

Volker asked Lord Glasman to introduce him to Farage. 'When I did so,' recalls Glasman, 'he said to Nigel, "I want to thank you for saving Nato." I asked what he was talking about and Mr Volker told me he'd heard Nigel had been to see Trump at Mar-a-Lago when [in late 2024] Trump was very tempted to withdraw from Nato because of low defence spending by European nations.'

'Volker said to Nigel, "You persuaded Trump to recommit to Nato." I asked Nigel if this was true and he said yes, he'd talked him round. I was astonished by two things. First, Nigel's modesty in that he hadn't blabbed about this. Secondly, that it was true. Modesty? Nigel Farage? But here was proof that there are, Glasman concluded, 'aspects of Nigel Farage that people don't see'.

He is the insurgent politician who could well be Britain's next prime minister, yet there is much about him the electorate don't know.

Behind the showmanship and the easy banter, for example, he can be surprisingly sensitive, as when he gave an interview to an upmarket Sunday newspaper and was mocked in the piece for having only one testicle, the result of cancer.

Cheekily, the interviewer was even sent back by her editor to ask which testicle was removed, to which Farage, with typical good humour, replied with an invitation to her 'to come and find out, ha-ha-ha!'

Quietly, though, he was devastated. He said later the article was 'the only thing I've ever read written about me that has hurt me.'

Yet there was no comeback on the paper for its insensitivity and intrusion. As far as the Establishment was concerned, the Right-wing Farage was fair game, no apology needed. Just stick the boot in.

Take the incident in August 2016, after the Brexit referendum and after he had (temporarily) stood down from politics. A Polish immigrant was punched in the head late at night in Harlow, Essex. Two days later he died of his injuries.

At the time of the incident, Farage was in America, where



SABOTAGE? With the Volvo whose wheel came loose on a motorway

he'd been invited by Trump – then just a presidential candidate – to give a speech at a campaign rally in Jackson, Mississippi in front of a 15,000-strong crowd.

Several UK media organisations and news programmes tried to link the tragedy in Harlow to so-called 'Brexit hate-crime'.

One virulently anti-Brexit journalist accused Farage of echoing 'the vitriol of Nazism', another said he had 'blood on his hands'. Farage said these allegations 'caused my family and me more misery than any other in my 25

years in politics. I couldn't even go out to buy a newspaper without abuse being hurled at me. All of us lived in fear of a reprisal.'

Yet when the teenage perpetrator came to court, it emerged that Brexit had nothing to do with the attack. It had instead been the result of antisocial behaviour – a tragic escalation of violence between two groups.

This sad story neatly captured the level of media bias, misinformation and hatred that Farage faced in the aftermath of his Brexit vote, and which continues

to this day. He remains a polarising figure, even though he played no part in the years of parliamentary parlour games or the official negotiations that followed the Brexit referendum.

Nonetheless, he is still blamed personally by millions of voters for its consequences.

But studying his long career in detail, as I have done, leaves no doubt that there is far more to Farage in a political sense than his opponents would like people to believe. Thanks to his abilities and his work rate, he is more influential and more visible now than ever, his every move tracked with trepidation by a Labour government that appears to have lost the confidence of the public.

His political instincts are far more finely tuned than those of most of his opponents. 'One of the big changes that's come about since Brexit is the growth in the electoral power of the working class, who have been decimated by immigration and deindustrialisation,' says Lord Glasman.

'Now they are decisive, and Nigel's political persona appeals to them. He expresses the huge amounts of disaffection they feel.'

He represents the politics of sovereignty in clear opposition to the previous era of globalisation. He approves of the common law. He has a love of liberty. He stands for the nation state. He's both very conservative and very radical. He's the messenger of the new.'

But, adds Glasman, there was always going to be huge resistance to his breaking of the two-party system. The Establishment were sure to do their best to undermine him, dismissing him as a member of the awkward squad. 'Misunderstanding of him is wilful.'

Nowhere is this clearer than in the charges against him of fascism and racism (see panel overleaf).

MISSED PART ONE IN YESTERDAY'S MAIL?



SCAN TO READ ON MAIL+

John Harvey, a senior Ukip member who has known Farage since 1991, says: 'In all the time I've known Nigel he's never said anything of a racist nature. He doesn't like that sort of thing at all.'

But others who knew him as a schoolboy at the independent Dulwich College in London have a different story to tell.

When he was made a prefect by the headmaster, there was outrage among a handful of staff, one of whom claimed that Farage had shouted 'Hitler Youth songs' during a camping trip. She urged the head, David Emms, to reverse his



ALWAYS A TARGET: A milkshake attack in 2024

decision. Emms refused, explaining that Farage was guilty of 'naughtiness not racism' and that some staff were 'fed up of his cheekiness and rudeness' and wanted to 'expel him'. He added, 'I

saw potential in him, made him a prefect and I was proved right.'

Emms's deputy, Terry Walsh, said Farage might have voiced support for extremist organisations such as the National Front

'because he knew it would rile' some members of staff and some of his contemporaries and it was therefore 'a joke'.

Walsh added: 'I don't think he ever, ever believed that. He was

ON BOXING Day 1986, the young and ambitious Nigel Farage drove back home from the City trading firm where he worked and called at a pub for a drink. Standing at the bar, he felt an excruciating pain in the lower left-hand side of his body.

Not feeling any better two days later, he went to A&E, where he was told he needed an urgent operation to fix a twisted testicle.

He was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Farnborough where a doctor said there had been a misdiagnosis. The cause of the pain was an infection and all he needed was a course of antibiotics.

Farage took the medication but after a few weeks the agony had not subsided and, alarmingly, his left testicle was swollen. After several more weeks, it was the size of a lemon and he could barely walk but the NHS consultant he saw simply advised him to keep taking the antibiotics.

By now panicking, Farage rang

Brushes with death – and how the NHS failed him

his boss, who said he was covered by the firm's medical insurance. Farage saw a private GP in London who insisted on him having a scan, after which a Harley Street groin surgeon concluded he had a tumour and his testicle would have to be removed.

After the operation, the 22-year-old was told he had testicular cancer. Secondary tumours in his stomach and lungs could not be ruled out.

Then, quite unexpectedly, he was given the all-clear. After six months of twice-weekly blood tests he was told the cancer had not returned. However, the effect

of the experience was lasting. While acknowledging that the NHS can deliver both the best and worst service, he raged against its decision not to give him a scan immediately, observing, 'without private healthcare I would probably be dead.'

This came just a year after a previous brush with death when, after an evening in the pub, he stepped out into a busy road at a pelican crossing and was hit by a VW Beetle. He was thrown into the air, landing on his head.

Miraculously, there was no brain damage. The most serious injury was to his left leg, which

much too caring and considerate of other people.'

But more allegations were made by Jean-Pierre Lihou, a contemporary of Farage at Dulwich. In an open letter to Farage, published in a newspaper, he recalled 'the guard-keen interest you had in two initials of your name doodled over your schoolbooks. Nigel Farage, NF, National Front.'

Lihou also remembered Farage 'singing the song starting with the words "Gas 'em all, gas 'em all"'. Subsequently, a Jewish contemporary at Dulwich said Farage would

'School banter was offensive, but never with any malice'

side up to him and growl: 'Hitler was right.'

In 2025, The Guardian reported speaking to more than 20 people who were at school with Farage, many of whom supported the idea that he had a 'racist past'.

One remembered Farage 'regularly' performing a Nazi salute in their classroom.

Some people, including the Labour government's attorney general, Lord Hermer, seized on these testimonies as proof that Farage held extremist views as a child. The newly appointed deputy prime minister, David Lammy, joined in, alleging to the BBC that Farage had 'flirted with the Hitler Youth when he was younger'.

Farage has repeatedly denied these allegations regarding his school years and questioned why these accusations surfaced at a time when his party, Reform UK, had led the opinion polls for a year. He believes they were politically motivated.

The Guardian kept the story going earlier this year when it said it had now spoken to 34 former pupils who maintained they had seen Farage 'behaving in a racist or anti-Semitic manner'. No definitive proof such as a photograph, film footage or a piece of writing was produced to support these accusations and, in its coverage,

even the newspaper itself was forced to ask: 'Who's telling the truth about Farage's school days?' It did not have a definitive answer.

Eventually, Farage admitted to 'aggressive banter' but not to racism. He even quoted from a Jewish contemporary that, 'while there was plenty of macho tongue-in-cheek schoolboy banter, it was humour, and yes, sometimes it was offensive but never with malice. I never heard Farage racially abuse anyone. If he had, he would have been reported and punished. He wasn't.'

Farage was 'p***ed off', dismissing the row as a confectioned smear, but his tetchiness was understandable in that he had already been asked countless times about this unproven story, which dated back almost half a century.

Other party leaders didn't have to field questions about their childhood behaviour. And yet as he knew very well, by failing to keep a level head, he risked prolonging his own agony.

Perhaps something is to be gained from the recollections of another Dulwich contemporary Nick Owen, who does not dismiss the idea that Farage could be contentious as a schoolboy, but has an alternative view about the true meaning behind his behaviour.

'If Nigel said controversial things, he did it for show and to provoke debate. He wasn't scared of raising issues and crossing the boundary about race and religion, but I think at that age you don't know when to stop. It was a very different time. Nigel certainly wasn't a liberal; he's always divided opinion. But that was always his character. I also remember that he would always challenge a weaker

'I said some ridiculous stuff, but not racist, necessarily'

teacher if he thought they were a waste of space.'

Another source says that Farage was simply prone to teasing people – whether they were members of staff or contemporaries. He did so, it is said, not because he was malicious but because he refused to take life too seriously. 'It's just his brand of humour,' says one friend. If true, it is a trait that he has carried into adulthood.

Farage himself told Channel 4 News that the idea he had ever sung Hitler Youth songs was 'silly' because he didn't even know the words. As for having ever made racist remarks as a schoolboy, he told the programme, 'Yes, of course, I said some ridiculous things, not necessarily racist things, it depends how you define it.'

'Was I a difficult, bolshie teenager who pushed the boundaries of debate further than perhaps I ought to have done? Yes. Have I ever been a member of any extremist organisation, Left or Right? No.'

The accusations of anti-Semitism and racism continued into February this year, yet to the dismay of prime minister and Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, they did not harm Reform UK's general

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position. The party had led in more than 170 consecutive polls, and whereas Labour's membership figures had dipped below 250,000 for the first time in years, Reform UK's were close to 270,000, making it the largest party by membership in Britain.

For my part, in my detailed examination of his life and career, I have found no evidence that Nigel Farage is either racist or 'far Right'.

Indeed, his resolve not to give in to the hate that he is shown but instead to ignore it should be applauded by everybody who believes in free speech and democracy, regardless of their political affiliation.

THE negativity aimed at Farage has not been restricted to individuals wanting to throw a milkshake, an egg or a brick at him. He has also been treated with suspicion and contempt by parts of the Establishment.

In the House of Commons other MPs routinely barrack and heckle him whenever he is on his feet. He alarms many of them, especially those on the Left, who are baffled by his popularity among working-class voters.

They cannot understand why that strand of society would back a member of the 'far Right', seemingly not appreciating that Farage anticipated the repercussions of mass immigration, EU rules and the Net Zero scheme long before those issues entered the mainstream.

Lord Glasman, who is often a panellist on the GB News television programme that Farage hosts, has sympathy for him when it comes to the hostility he is shown. 'I respect Nigel for holding a position in the face of tremendous hate,' Glasman says.

'He has to deal with the National Front element and other nasty racist elements that have tried to infiltrate his party, it's true, but in many ways, I think he is a bulwark against a far nastier Right.'

He always distances himself from the right-wing political activist Tommy Robinson, whom he is known to dislike.

THE personal toll of never knowing if or when a lurking stranger

Was the peculiar move to downgrade his security politically motivated?



LED TO SAFETY: Farage after the Edinburgh pub barricade

might strike him has haunted Nigel Farage, ever since he gave a press conference in Edinburgh in 2013. The then leader of Ukip had to be barricaded inside a pub on the Royal Mile after an angry mob turned up and accused him of being racist, fascist and homophobic. For his own safety, he was driven away in a police riot van.

'Everything changed for Nigel after that,' says political ally Paul Nuttall. 'He went from being a normal bloke who could walk down the street to someone who needed private security.' He even became convinced that his Volvo

had been tampered with after a wheel came loose while he was driving on a motorway, causing him to lose control of the car.

Was this an assassination attempt? Having received death threats in the past, Farage did not rule it out.

The £1 million-a-year cost of his round-the-clock protection – eventually involving nine men working on a rota system – had to be met by Ukip. Entreaties made to the then prime minister David Cameron for some state funding were refused.

Death threats by email were a regular occurrence, whether writ-

ten by an obsessive fan, an IRA supporter or an Islamist extremist. The fear of an acid attack was also uppermost in Farage's mind – prompting his security team always to travel with significant quantities of saline solution and clinical gauze.

Farage's concerns for his personal safety were certainly justified, and after he entered Parliament as an MP and party leader of Reform UK in July 2024, he finally had a taxpayer-funded team of eight.

But then, to his surprise, in the autumn of 2025, the parliamentary

authorities downgraded his security detail to just a driver and a single personal protection officer.

Farage was puzzled. Why had it taken 12 months to conclude that he was worthy only of a lower form of protection, given that his profile had never been higher?

Some in his inner circle suspected the downgrade was politically motivated. Government sources denied this and pointed out that a larger state-funded team would still be available to him at rallies and some other public events.

After careful thought, he declined to use the new two-man team. Instead, the £1 million-plus annual cost of keeping him safe would be funded privately.

The cost of his security re-surfaced when The Guardian reported that Christopher Harborne, a Thailand-based aviation and cryptocurrency tycoon, had given Farage a gift of £5 million, which had not been declared to the parliamentary authorities.

Farage maintained that it was personal and not political, was given on an unconditional basis and would be used to cover the costs of his security in the years to come.

The suspicion among Farage's opponents was that Harborne's considerable financial interests in the world of digital currencies might have shaped Reform UK's crypto policies, though Harborne said: 'I wasn't expecting anything in return apart from ensuring Nigel's safety.'

To Farage's detractors, stories such as Harborne's £5 million gift 'prove' whatever they already suspected; for Farage's supporters, they are either blown out of proportion or are an irrelevance.

They care more about what he can do for the country and for them. The parallels with Donald Trump's relationship with the American electorate are striking.

And as Farage himself recently wrote: 'Populism was the winner in the recent elections in America. Who's to say it could not be the same in the UK, too?'

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IN 1999 a story in The Times linked UKIP with the extremist BNP, the British National Party.

Two years previously, Farage had agreed to meet a man called Mark Deavin for lunch. Deavin was a former student of Alan Sked, then the Ukip leader, but it later emerged Deavin was a BNP activist. Deavin told Farage he had information about Sked, with whom Farage and his Ukip colleague David Lott were at loggerheads over the future of the party.

After lunch, in the street, Farage and Deavin were photographed speaking to a third man whom The Times identified as Tony 'The Bomber' Lecomber, a BNP member who served two prison sentences in the late 1980s and early 1990s for possession of

Unproven racism claims his enemies pounce on

explosives and assaulting a Jewish schoolteacher.

Farage confirmed to the newspaper that he had met Deavin but said: 'I have no recollection of ever meeting Lecomber. I do not know him. I have been stitched up. I do not and have never supported the BNP.'

Who took the photograph? Who leaked it to The Times? 'We think we know, but we cannot prove

it,' says David Lott more than 25 years later.

He believes the story showed that Ukip were being seen as a potential threat to the Labour government's plans for European integration.

The compromising image has since been used against Farage by his opponents to suggest that he has had links to far-Right activists. Equally toxic is a

claim by Sked that Farage once said in his presence: 'There's no need to worry about the n**** vote. The n**n**s will never vote for us.'

But did he really say such a thing? No evidence has ever been produced and Farage has vehemently denied both saying these words and being racist – although his enemies have repeated the claim.



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