

Letters to the Editor

Michael Meadowcroft

I was saddened to learn of the death of Michael Meadowcroft, who I last saw around 18 months ago.

He was a walking, talking encyclopaedia of Liberal / Lib Dem political history and enormously helpful when I was doing my PhD on the Orpington by-election a few years ago. At the same time, he was never shy of giving constructive criticism and as a result my PhD was that much better.

Thank you Michael – I'm sure you'll be keeping an eye on what's happening down here on the UK political scene from your lofty new perch in Lib Dem heaven!

York Membery

Palestine

I was interested in Eugenio Biagini's review of Peter Shambrook, *The Policy of Deceit: Britain and Palestine 1914–1939* (issue 130, spring 2026) in which he describes Shambrook's view that the British government followed a policy of deliberate deceit in having promised Palestine to Sharif Hussein of Mecca in 1915, and then in 1917 issuing the Balfour Declaration promising a 'national home' for the Jews in Palestine.

That is certainly what many in the Arab world did and still

believe, but it is not correct. In March 1916, after the negotiations with the Sharif had been concluded, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey suggested to Britain's French and Russian allies that they should tell the Jews that 'when in course of time the Jewish colonists in Palestine have grown strong enough to cope with the Arab populations, they may be allowed to take the management of the internal affairs of Palestine (with the exception of Jerusalem and the Holy Places) into their own hands'. It is inconceivable that he would have written in this vein had he believed that Palestine would be included in the area of independence promised to the Arabs.

Vernon Bogdanor

Rosebery

Although I was pleased to see from his letter (issue 130, spring 2026) that my article in the previous edition ('The political skills of

four Liberal Prime Ministers', part 1) has persuaded Hugh Gault to read more about Campbell-Bannerman, I was puzzled by his comments on Rosebery's communication skills. I nowhere say that Rosebery had 'limited oratory' – quite the reverse; I say that this was one of his very few skills.

I do not agree that his ability to talk to Queen Victoria proves he was a good communicator. Mr Gault ignores the evidence I give on his unwillingness to talk to his colleagues – which was far more important.

It's a good thing that Mr Gault refers to Dick Leonard's excellent book on Prime Ministers. However, the *Journal's* academic standards required me to quote from original sources. I will add that Dick, who was a friend of mine, remained an active supporter of the Labour Party, not a possible Liberal.

Alan Mumford

Liberal History News: Michael Meadowcroft, 1942 – 2026 (continued from page 7)

Away from politics he was an enthusiastic traditional jazz clarinetist and saxophonist, and for some years led his own Granny Lee's All-Stars, named after a former restaurant in Westminster.

He married Elizabeth Bee in 1987, and had a son and daughter from his dissolved first marriage.

Publications include: *Success in Local Government* (1971), *Liberals*