

Michael Meadowcroft

Currently Michael is:

- Former Honorary Archivist and now Vice-President of [National Liberal Club](#)
- Chair of [T V Harrison Community Action Group](#)
- Committee member of [Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society](#)
- President of Leeds West Liberal Democrats
- Former chair of Trustees of the [Leeds Library](#)

Michael has had a lifelong involvement in politics. Born in March 1942 in the Calder Valley, he was brought up in Southport as a consequence of his railwayman grandfather's promotion from signalman at Sowerby Bridge to St Luke's Southport. Domestic economic problems forced the premature end of his time at school and he spent four years as a bank clerk before going to work at Liberal Party headquarters in London in January 1962. He had joined the Liberal party in 1958 and was Chair of the Merseyside Regional Young Liberals when he went to HQ.

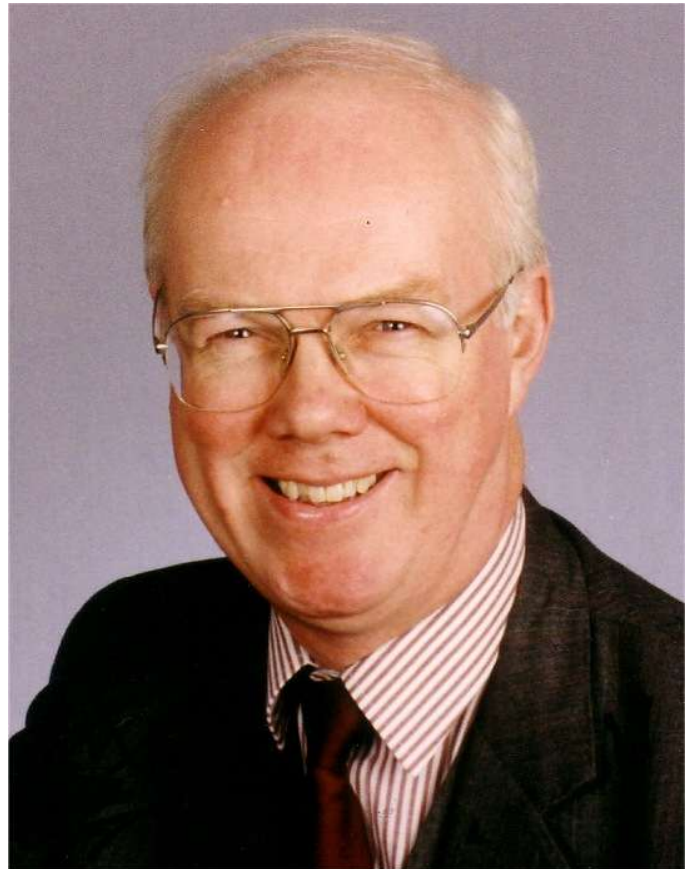
Michael was the party's Local Government Officer for five years before being asked to take over its Yorkshire regional office in 1967. He was elected to the Leeds City Council the following May - one of the first group of three Liberal Councillors there for thirty years - and was Liberal Group leader for thirteen years. He was elected to the West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council in 1973. In 1983 he won the Leeds West parliamentary seat, the first parliamentary Liberal gain from Labour in a general election for over fifty years. Michael held a number of national party offices and inaugurated the Association of Liberal Councillors and the Liberal History Group.

In parliament, among other duties, he was Deputy Liberal Whip and Health spokesman. The advent of the SDP and the stresses and strains of the Alliance were not helpful in a predominantly working class constituency and he lost Leeds West in 1987.

No-one wanted to employ an ex-Liberal MP and Michael survived through journalism until the Policy Studies Institute gave him the exotic title of Distinguished Visiting Fellow in 1989.

From 1990, being the then Chair of the Electoral Reform Society, and approached originally as a consequence of the implosion of the Soviet Union, he was in considerable demand as a consultant to new and emerging democracies and led or was a member of fifty missions to thirty-five different countries. See below.

He has been involved in numerous voluntary organisations, both as Chief Executive and as a member of management committees and has been a columnist in *The Times* and *The Yorkshire Post* as well as appearing on *Any Questions* and *Question Time*. He still produces much freelance journalism and his written archive is on this website. His contributions to **The Guardian** can also be found on its website [here](#). He is in particular demand as an obituarist.



A photo of Michael.

Michael has been involved in the jazz world since he formed the Bienville Jazz Band in 1958. Since his time in parliament, and a residency at the Grandma Lee's Restaurant, then opposite Big Ben, he has led the Granny Lee Jazz Band. The Leeds Club gigs in 2008 and 2009 were recorded and surprisingly good CDs are available. Recent gigs have been at the National Liberal Club and the Leeds Jazz Club.

To celebrate his 80th birthday in March 2022, members of the Granny Lee Band from the 1980s to today got together and recorded six new tracks. (See [jazz](#) pages for more information).

He was elected a "Chevalier de la Commanderie du Faugères", the appellation in the Languedoc where we had a share of a house - in 1998 and was appointed an Honorary Alderman of the City of Leeds in 2002. Michael carries a **World Citizen card**.

See also:

- [Michael's CV](#)
 - [International Missions](#)
 - [World Citizen movement](#) - find out about it and how to get your Citizen of the World membership card.
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Elizabeth Bee

Liz was born in July 1954 in Watnall in Nottinghamshire, on the edge of D H Lawrence country (although it must be pointed out that both her parents were born and bred in Yorkshire). Educated at Annie Holgate Grammar School in Hucknall, when it was brand new, she took advantage of the large amount of music at the school and started to play the violin, having learned the piano from the age of six.

She originally studied teacher training at City of Leeds and Carnegie College (now part of Leeds Beckett University) but there were then no teaching jobs available for Liz's speciality of music. As a stop gap she got a job in the Music Library in Leeds Central Library and stayed, eventually re-training as a librarian in 1980. After some temporary jobs, she was appointed as Information Officer to Bradford Met Council for Voluntary Service (BMCVS) in 1982 and remained there (it became Bradford CVS) until 2001 when she joined FunderFinder, a small charity based in Leeds that made computer software and other resources, mainly for grant-seekers. When FunderFinder closed she took on a series of temporary jobs, ending up with the Adoption Register for England, which the government closed down in March 2019. At that point retirement beckoned and Liz pursues her publishing, music and family history interests.



A photo of Liz.

In 1994 she accompanied Michael to Malawi on the first of his long missions, and helped re-organise the UNDP library there, as well as helping out with the election mission. Other work on electoral missions has included the Palestinian elections in 1995/96, helping informally in Suriname in 2000 and being an Observer in Zambia in 2001.

She has been a Liberal and Liberal Democrat candidate for local elections in Leeds as well as agent and organiser.

Music is a major part of Liz's life, both in the attending of concerts, operas etc and in playing. Liz has played with the [Sinfonia of Leeds](#) for many years, as well as more recently with the Northern Wagner Orchestra, and occasionally with the [Harrogate Philharmonic](#).

She was a trustee of the [McDougall Trust](#) for seven years, which brought together interests in electoral reform and library/information work.

An interest in family and local history brings more than enough work to keep her occupied for years to come.

Publishing books under the [Beecroft](#) imprint has become a growing interest. Liz has designed, edited and published books written by friends and is keen to continue this line of work. In 2019 she published the *Yorkshire Yellow Book - essays on a liberal future for Yorkshire and the Humber*, in 2021 *Leeds, a biographical dictionary*, by David Thornton, and in 2022 *Leeds Lakes and Ponds*, by Anthony Silson.

Waterloo Lodge



Waterloo Lodge from the gate.

2020 marked the 200th anniversary of our home - Waterloo Lodge and February 2020 saw us complete major renovations, not least the hard surfacing of the drive, probably for the very first time, and the rebuilding of an extension.

We had hoped to stage a birthday party for the house during the year, but world events rather put paid to that!

Originally built as the mill house to Waterloo Mills, the house eventually passed into the hands of a "gentleman" in the 1850s and subsequently remained in the same family until the early 20th century. One famous resident from 1911 onwards was Scriven Bolton, a renowned astronomer.

For more details on the history of the house, see the document which you can download as a pdf [here](#).

Accommodation

We have been welcoming singers, actors and theatre/opera production staff to stay at Waterloo Lodge for 40 years, and indeed, carried on the tradition established by the former owner of the house. For more information see our [Accommodation](#) page.



Beecroft Publications

beecroft header

We created Beecroft Publications over twenty years ago as a way of publishing our guide to the wines of Faugères - 'Faugères, a Guide to the Appellation' and also Michael's writings. As digital printing and short-run technology became cheaper and more available, this made "self" publishing more practical. We have since then helped a number of friends and colleagues to get their books into print.

Run on a non-profit basis, we specialise in small print run/private publishing - for example, memoirs by Leeds-based authors, books on Leeds history and books on Liberal issues.

For our full stock list and more information visit the [Beecroft Publications](#) website.