

Liberty, libertarians and taking liberties

By John Mair, Visiting Professor at the Centre for Brexit Studies

I am a firm member of the urban liberal elite. I live in central Oxford after all. But I am also a libertarian and believe with Voltaire that ‘I may disagree with what you have to say, but I shall defend to the death your right to say it’. I have in the past given Katie Hopkins a platform. She blew it by getting her supporters in the audience to be rude and aggressive to me and others. She lost her LBC broadcasting slot a week later.

Hence **THE CASE FOR BREXIT** book – available in paperback on Amazon and digitally on Kindle – I am a very firm “Remainer” on Europe, not a “Leave” bone in my body. But I had the feeling that the academic ‘thinkers’ that could be associated with the Leave campaign had never properly had their day in print (Professor Patrick Minford, notwithstanding). Hence, via Bite Sized Books joining up with the Centre for Brexit studies at Birmingham City University, I came up with the idea to “give” it to them as part of my Bite Sized Brexit series.

“Academic Brexiteers” were easy to find as they lurk in intellectual foxholes like Brexit Briefing, Comment Central and Brexit Central. Outward-facing but still somewhat secluded domains of thought. The same names cropped up again and again. Almost self-selecting. They even have a mug sheet of their supporters and their academic home On Brexit Briefing. Older men predominate.

Bite-Sized **Brexit**

The Case for Brexit

UNITED KINGDOM OF
GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND



PASSPORT



Edited by **John Mair, Neil Fowler**
and **Professor Alex De Ruyter**

Foreword by **Sir John Redwood MP**



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Some are well known, such as Professor Patrick Minford of Cardiff University; others less so like Professor David Paton of Nottingham University. Recruiting writers was not easy. We ended up with eight after approaching on going for forty. Some interesting names and CVs came out of the woodwork, such as Sir Andrew Wood: formerly Her Majesty's Ambassador to Russia. They all wrote 1500 words for free. In the spirit of liberty, our editorial pens were light. Freedom to think and write is near indivisible in my view.

The book, though not without its hiccups, was published to my great pleasure. On the launch night, which took place at Grayling's London office, it went off very well with mature adult discussion of their points of view. The audience appreciated their arguments and bolstered them. There have been few intellectual meeting points between thoughtful Leavers and us 'Remoaners' over the past three years (and in this sense was an example of Centre for Brexit Studies' remit to be a platform for those of "Leave" and "Remain" perspectives to come together and engage in constructive debate; which has been sadly lacking in the wider public domain). As such, this was an oasis.

Read the book. Argue with it.

Would I let my libertarian instincts free again? Sure. Uncomfortable rides and trouble are the flip side of freedom – something George Orwell pointed out, as commemorated by his statue at BBC Broadcasting House, that "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear".

The Case for Brexit is available on Amazon now. [Find out more here.](#)

John Mair is a Visiting Professor at the CBS. He has edited twenty eight books on journalism and the media. In a previous life he was a producer and director for the BBC, ITV and Channel Four. He helped to invent 'Question Time' forty years ago.