

HARROW SCHOOL

TREVELYAN SOCIETY

TUESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2026

AT 5.30 PM

OLD SPEECH ROOM GALLERY, HARROW-ON-THE-HILL

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY DR PHILIP MANSEL

“WHAT HAVE THE OTTOMANS EVER DONE FOR US?”

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND EUROPE

FROM MEHMET THE CONQUEROR TO ATATÜRK

In this fascinating and beautifully illustrated talk, renowned historian and writer Philip Mansel will explore the relationship over six centuries between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, one of the largest and longest-lived empires in history. Going beyond the recurrent conflict and rivalry, the talk will discuss the many significant ways in which the two interacted over time, many of them highly and mutually beneficial.

As allies and diplomatic partners of France, Britain and the Netherlands, and others, the Ottoman Empire underpinned prolonged periods of political stability - and religious and ethnic harmony - in vast swathes of south-eastern Europe and western Asia. Its cities, roads and ports, its bankers, traders and their ships, played a vital role in vastly expanding “the Levant Trade”, the transformational commerce between Europe and the East. Paralleling this, extensive cultural exchanges over this period acted as influential sources of scientific, intellectual and artistic inspiration and innovation in Europe.

The true importance of the Ottoman Empire perhaps only became clear with its progressive demise over the course of the nineteenth century, and its eventual collapse in the early twentieth; the resulting vacuum unleashed protracted conflict and chaos across the whole region, the consequences of which we are still experiencing.

Dr Mansel is an acknowledged expert on the Ottoman Empire and the Levant, as well as on France from Louis XIV to Napoleon III. Born in 1951, Philip was educated at Eton (KS), Balliol College, Oxford (MA), and University College, London (PhD). He has lived in Paris, Istanbul and Beirut, and now in London.

Over the past five decades, he has written very extensively - and lectured worldwide - on these subjects, including three definitive books on the region: *Constantinople – City of the World’s Desire* as capital of the Ottoman Empire; *Levant – Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* about Smyrna, Beirut and Alexandria; and *Aleppo – Rise and Fall of a Great Merchant City*. His fourteen books have won various awards, and his work has been translated into French, German, Italian, Russian, Greek, Turkish, Arabic and Chinese.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, the Institute of Historical Research, the Royal Asiatic Society, the Royal Society of Literature, and co-founder of both the Levantine Heritage Foundation and the Society for Court Studies. He is also Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres in France, Order of the Crown in Belgium, and former president of the Conseil scientifique du Centre de recherche du Chateau de Versailles.