

# The Man Who Deciphered Linear B

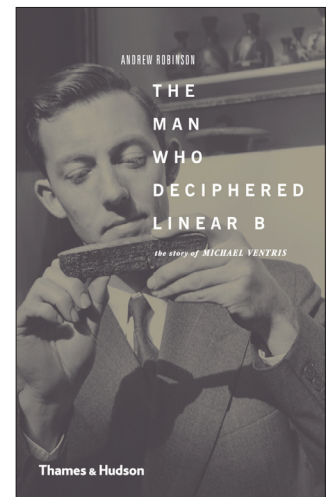
*The Story of Michael Ventris*

**Andrew Robinson**

**Publication date: 27th February 2012**

**Price: £8.95**

*New in paperback*



Linear B is Europe's oldest readable writing, dating from the middle of the second millennium BC. First discovered in 1900, on clay tablets among the ruins of the Palace of Minos at Knossos, Crete, it remained a mystery for over fifty years until 1952, when Michael Ventris discovered that its signs did not represent an unknown language as previously believed, but an archaic dialect of Greek, more than 500 years older than the Greek of Homer. Dubbed the 'Everest of Greek archaeology', the decipherment was all the more remarkable because Ventris was not a trained classical scholar but an architect by profession, who had first heard of Linear B as a schoolboy. An initial fascination became a lifelong obsession for this intriguing and contradictory man, a gifted linguist but a divided soul. This book, newly available in paperback, tells not just the story of Linear B but also that of the 'modest genius' who broke the code.

- 'Excellent: well researched and clearly presented ... compelling reading' – *The Times Literary Supplement*
- 'Excellent ... Robinson understands how to make the complexities of pictograms clear to the non-expert. The book gives many examples, and would appeal to anyone interested in crosswords, codes and cyphers, but it also tells a fascinating human story' – *The Independent*
- 'A wonderfully swift and clear biography, written for the non-specialist' – *The Economist*
- 'A superb biography of Michael Ventris, combining a warm account of his life with just enough technical details to satisfy those who have knowledge of linguistics or indeed of the classics. It is a splendid read, and a fine memorial to the split personality that enabled Ventris to decipher Minoan Linear B so triumphantly' – *Current World Archaeology*

## Author

Andrew Robinson is the author of some twenty-five books, including the bestselling *The Story of Writing*, *The Story of Measurement* and *Lost Languages*. Formerly the literary editor of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, he has been a visiting fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge.

[All information is provisional and subject to change](#)

---

## Extent

168pp

## Size

21.5 x 13.5cm

## Illustrations

Over 40 illustrations

## Binding

Paperback

## Price

£8.95

**ISBN 978 0 500 289983**

---

## Press Office Contact

### Holly Blaxill

Thames & Hudson Ltd  
181A High Holborn  
London WC1V 7QX

**T** +44 (0)20 7845 5020

**F** +44 (0)20 7845 5050

**E** [h.blaxill@thameshudson.co.uk](mailto:h.blaxill@thameshudson.co.uk)

**W** [www.thamesandhudson.com](http://www.thamesandhudson.com)