



Michael Ventris: the man who deciphered Linear B

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Linear B is Europe's oldest readable writing, dating from the middle of the second millennium BC.

Discovered in 1900 on clay tablets among the ruins of the Palace of Minos at Knossos, Crete, it remained mysteriously unreadable for half a century until 1952, when Michael Ventris made a remarkable finding. He worked out it did not represent an unknown language, as previously believed, but an archaic dialect of Greek over 500 years older than the Greek of Homer.

Marking 100 years since Ventris's birth, join his biographer Andrew Robinson to explore his life story, interlaced with his decipherment of Linear B. Dubbed the 'Everest of archaeology', the decipherment was all the more remarkable as Ventris was not a trained classical scholar but a modernist architect who became fascinated by the challenge of Linear B as a teenage schoolboy. An intriguing and contradictory man, he was an extraordinary linguist but a divided soul who died in a car crash soon after his decipherment was accepted by classical scholars.

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