

Hello. Good evening.

My name is John Kittmer. I am the chair of the Anglo-Hellenic League.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this relaunch of the League's Runciman Award: our double summer celebration - two years of wonderful books about Greece and two hundred years since the outbreak of the Greek revolution and the kindling of the flame of Greek freedom.

The Runciman Award is now in its 35th year. Founded on the initiative of the Earl Jellicoe to honour Sir Steven Runciman, the Award looks for the best new books in English about Greece and acts as an enthusiastic cheerleader for them and their authors. The Award celebrates the strong bonds between Britain and Greece, and between the wider English-speaking world and the world of Hellenism. The Award recognises the strong desire of readers in English to enter imaginatively and with understanding and empathy into the long, rich and formative Greek experience: across time, from Mycenae to Mitsotakis. We think it plays an important, established role in inter-cultural exchange.

We are relaunching the Award this year after a lengthy and successful search that began in 2019, to find new sponsors for the Award. We are delighted that the A.C. Laskaridis Charitable Foundation and the A.G. Leventis Foundation responded with enthusiasm and generosity to our pitch. This is the first year of a five-year funding package with the two foundations. On behalf of all of us at the League, the Council, our members, our judging panel, I want to express our gratitude to the two Foundations and their teams - particularly, Evi Lazou and Angeliki Kosmopoulou at the Laskaridis Foundation and Tassos Leventis and Georgina Dimopoulou at the Leventis Foundation. We couldn't do what we do without you. We are hugely grateful for your support and encouragement. Thank you.

Like many, I hoped that this year's celebration of the Greek bicentenary and relaunch of the Runciman Award would offer opportunities for us all to get together in person, to socialise, to talk, to party: in London, Athens and elsewhere. Above all, the League is a friendship society and we feel very strongly the physical absence of our friends.

Even so, through this technology we can at least remind each other of our friendships, to continue our charitable work together and to look forward to the final relaxation of pandemic restrictions later in the year. So I welcome all of our members and supporters who are joining us here tonight. Thank you for your continued support of the League. And if this is your first League event, let me extend a particularly warm welcome.

The event ahead of us will happen in three acts.

First, Prof. Stathis Kalyvas will give our keynote address. I will introduce him in a moment.

Then, Prof. Peter Frankopan, the chair of this year's judging panel, will give the panel's view of this year's competition and will announce the winner or winners...

I'm giving nothing away now, but I can assure you that waiting patiently in the wings are the winners or winner - ready to accept the prize and talk about the winning book or books.

I will close the event with a round of thanks to our speaker, our judging panel and a few others.

Before we kick off, let me offer those of you who are new to Zoom some guidance and some reassurance. First, all of you in the audience are invisible and inaudible to each other and to our speakers tonight. We have disabled the Q&A and chat functions: you are free to sit back and simply enjoy the event. Secondly, two of the talks will involve a speaker and an accompanying slide projection. Depending on the device you're using to watch the event, you can (with a little bit of fiddling) adjust the image balance between slides and speaker according to your own preference. Zoom technology allows this. Finally, this event is being recorded and we will upload it to our YouTube channel in the next couple of days or so.