



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
ALUMNI
CAMBRIDGE SOCIETY OF SURREY

**“Lessons from History-The People's War”
Lecture presented by John Willis**



on Wednesday 11th February 2025 at 10.45 for 11.15am

at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club, The Drive, Leatherhead KT22_8QP

John Willis is one of Britain's best-known television executives. He was educated at Eltham College and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge where he read history. He started his career as a documentary maker and won a string of awards for his films, including *Johnny Go Home* (which won the 1975 BAFTA for best documentary); *Alice – A Fight for Life*; *Rampton: The Secret Hospital*; and *First Tuesday: Return To Nagasaki*.

He went on to hold several senior television management positions, including Controller of Documentaries and Current Affairs at Yorkshire Television, Director of Programmes at Channel 4, Vice-President of National Programs at WGBH Boston, Director of Factual and Learning at the BBC, and Chief Executive of Mentorn Media (whose productions included *Question Time* for the BBC).

In 2012 John was elected as Chair of BAFTA. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and of the Royal Television Society. He is also Visiting Industrial Professor in Television at the University of Bristol. Currently he chairs the Board of Governors at the Royal Central School for Speech and Drama.

Alongside his career in television, John has authored several books on the Second World War. In 2025, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, John published *The People's War: Unheard Voices – Life on the Battlefield and at home in World War II*. This explores the BBC's biggest ever oral history project: 47,000 testimonies and memories from the Second World War, including hundreds of diaries and letters, which had previously remained buried in the archive. *The People's War* sweeps from the battlefronts of North Africa and Italy to land girls in the British countryside, from female internees in the Far East to children in the Blitz. This is not war seen through the eyes of politicians or generals, but a conflict told with extraordinary candour and humour by ordinary men and women who lived, fought, grieved, loved and survived through the war.

In addition to *The People's War*, John has published *Churchill's Few: The Battle of Britain* and *Secret Letters* (both in 2020), *Nagasaki: The Forgotten Prisoners* (2022), and *Fighter Boy* (2024).

John Willis is a unique historian: his lecture promises to capture the interest of many members of the Society. Numbers are limited to 100, so the Society's members and friends are encouraged to make an early booking.

*Cambridge Society of Surrey is part of the University of Cambridge's global alumni network,
with 450 similar Cambridge groups in 115 countries and regions.*

Cambridge Society of Surrey Lecture & Lunch
at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club, The Drive, Leatherhead KT22 8QP
Wednesday 11th February 2026

Booking Form

Please join us at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club to hear John Wills discuss **Lessons from History-The People's War**, and enjoy an excellent 2-course lunch, and, of course, stimulating Cambridge alumni company. Tea and coffee will be served from 10.45am. The lecture will commence at about 11.15am and will be followed by a Q&A and lunch. There will be a pay bar. The event will finish at about 2.30pm.

Tickets are £35.00 each. Early booking is recommended.
Booking Deadline: Thursday 5th February 2026

Please book your ticket by BACS payment to the Society's account

Sort code: 09-06-66 A/C no: 40785981.

Please confirm your payment by e-mail to the Society's Treasurer, Tim Sketchley
[tsketchley@outlook.com] Tel: 0208 940 9315 Mobile: 07764-398177

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I would like ... ticket(s) at £35.00 per ticket for the lecture and lunch
"Lessons from History-The People's War"
on Wednesday 11th February 2026
at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club, The Drive, Leatherhead KT22 8QP

Title, Surname & initials (capitals, please):

Preferred first name:

University/College (if applicable):

Address:

Mobile No. (for contact on the day):

Landline telephone number:

E-mail address:

Names of guests (with preferred first name and university/college if applicable)

1.

2.

Please mention any special dietary requirements as lunch will be served after the lecture.

Pay by BACS to Cambridge Society of Surrey Sort code: 09-06-66 A/C no: 40785981
Quoting reference "Lessons/History" and surname to identify your payment,
with confirmatory email to the Society's Treasure, Tim Sketchley [tsketchley@outlook.com]

Please return your form as soon as possible to arrive no later than Thursday 5th February 2026.

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