

Professor Michael Wood (2025-26)

Michael is an acclaimed historian, broadcaster, and author whose groundbreaking work has shaped the field of public history for over four decades. He has produced more than 120 historical documentaries and written a series of bestselling books, engaging millions with his compelling narratives of the ancient, medieval, and modern worlds. A pioneer in historical storytelling, his signature blend of scholarship and accessibility has earned him widespread recognition as one of Britain's most effective communicators of the past.

Michael's accolades include an OBE for services to public history and broadcasting, the British Academy President's Medal, and the Historical Association's Medlicott Medal. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, the Society of Antiquaries, and the Royal Society of Arts, and continues to serve on several cultural and academic boards. He has also received numerous honorary degrees in recognition of his work. His contributions exemplify the vital role historians play in public education, cultural preservation, and civic dialogue.

Michael read History at Oriel College, Oxford, and did postgraduate research in Anglo-Saxon history before moving into journalism and television. Though he stresses he is not a classicist, he has had a lifetime's love of Greece and the Greek world in particular, and some of his best known TV programmes have been about the Classics: including *In Search of the Trojan War*, six films on the origins of Greek archaeology and the Homeric question, and *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, an epic journey on the ground across the Near East, Central Asia and India, tracing the story of the Macedonian conqueror. Both series have been seen across the world, and the books were number one best sellers.

His most recent film on the Classics was *Ovid: The Poet and the Emperor*, for the 2000th anniversary of the poet's death. For the last twelve years his work has mainly focused on China-

his most recent book is *China's Greatest Poet: In the Footsteps of Du Fu* (2023), retracing the life of the Tang dynasty poet. But he plans to return soon to the Classics, and in particular to the Late Bronze Age Aegean, around which he first hitchhiked as a teenager, sleeping out at Golden Mycenae and 'Thisbe of the many pigeons'.

Michael's work has been translated into many languages, and he is a frequent contributor to public lectures, conferences and media worldwide. In his role at Manchester, he continues to lead fieldwork and engage with students and the wider community. A passionate advocate for the public value of the humanities, he is an outstanding ambassador for historical scholarship and its enduring relevance to society today, but also for understanding the past in its living landscape.