



31st Levantine Heritage Foundation dinner gathering in London, with guest speaker Gareth Winrow and to be announced.

Patriot and Liberal Internationalist? The Life of Ahmed Robenson

Ahmed Robenson, the celebrated sportsman and a pioneer of the scouting movement in the late Ottoman Empire, is a well-known figure among Turkish commentators. However, much of the details of his life are surprisingly unknown, and some of the information that is readily available has been manipulated by official propaganda and has even been deliberately distorted by Ahmed Robenson himself.

Arriving in Istanbul from England as a young child in 1891, Ahmed Robenson was originally educated at the Kuleli military school. He later became a popular teacher of physical education at the Galatasaray Lycée, introduced basketball and other sports to the Ottoman Empire, and was one of the first goalkeepers for the highly successful Galatasaray football team. In spite of being suspected of involvement in espionage at the end of the First World War, Robenson later briefly served as a president of the Galatasaray sports club and played an instrumental role in the construction of the Taksim sports stadium. Developing a close relationship with the American Methodist pastor, Asa K. Jennings, in the 1920s Robenson worked as a translator and intermediary for the Turkish-American Clubs Project and helped establish the Smyrna Welfare Council. Apparently frustrated and disillusioned, Ahmed Robenson eventually abandoned Turkey in 1929 and spent his final years in New York.

Ahmed Robenson remains a folk-hero among sporting and scouting circles in Turkey, but his life was a complicated one and has been the subject of much controversy. Contesting the arguments of his critics, a case may be made which recognises that Ahmed Robenson was both a patriot and a liberal internationalist.



Ahmed Robenson



Gareth Winrow is currently a writer, independent researcher, and part-time tutor for the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford University. His latest book, *Whispers Across Continents: In Search of the Robinsons* - [cover](#), is about to be published by Amberley. He previously worked in Turkey for twenty years where he was a Professor in the Department of International Relations at Istanbul Bilgi University. A recipient of two NATO Research Fellowships and a US Institute of Peace Fellowship, he has worked as a consultant for Eurasia Group, is a member of Chatham House, and serves on the editorial board of the journal *Turkish Studies*. He has published extensively on Turkish foreign policy and on energy and regional security issues. The holder of a scholarship to study Modern History at Keble College, Oxford University (BA Hons.), he also has an MA in International Relations and Strategic Studies from Lancaster University and a Ph.D in the Department of Government from the University of Manchester.

24 July 2019, 6.00 pm start (meet in the Britannia Bar), talks start 6.30 pm, ending 8 pm, event end 10 pm
Royal Thames Yacht Club, 60 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LF

Talks are free for LHF members but booking essential: <https://31st-lhf-gathering.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Optional informal dinner after the lectures in the venue where guests pay via booking, but for numbers please still register even for lectures only, which are free. For gentlemen jacket and tie is required in this venue.

Dinner tickets costs £35 for LHF Members, £40 for non-Members, plus Eventbrite booking fee.

Please support these events by becoming a sponsor. We provide these talks for free as part of our mission to preserve and promote the research and public understanding of Levantine heritage. Sponsoring the talks helps cover the LHF's costs in arranging these talks in central London. For sponsorship packages, please contact chairman@levantineheritage.com. All sponsors will be recognised at events and on our website.