

Ken Follett to launch

Beyond Bayeux: Stories from the Middle Ages

a ten-month season at the French Institute in London



The French Institute in London presents ***Beyond Bayeux: Stories from the Middle Ages***, a ten-month season running from October 2026 to July 2027 and echoing the landmark Bayeux Tapestry exhibition at the British Museum.

Internationally bestselling author **Ken Follett** will kick off this ambitious **programme exploring the celebrated masterpiece and the medieval world beyond it** on **14 October**. He will reflect on the **links between his novel *The Evening and the Morning* and the Bayeux Tapestry**. Drawing on the remarkable medieval masterpiece that inspired part of his research, Follett will explore how history, storytelling and visual narrative intertwine, evoking the world of eleventh-century Europe.

On **4 December**, **Michael Lewis**, lead curator of the **British Museum's Bayeux Tapestry exhibition**, will meet **Leonie Hicks**, Professor of Medieval Studies at Canterbury Christ Church University, for a conversation on the **significance of 1066 for the English and on the Tapestry as an extraordinary record of the Norman Conquest of England**.

On **19 January 2027**, one of today's most influential historians, **Peter Frankopan** – acclaimed author of ***The Silk Roads*** – will offer a new perspective on **1066**, arguing that the Battle of Hastings was perhaps not the most important thing the Normans did in 1066...

The French Institute will take the audience **behind the scenes of the historic loan of the Bayeux Tapestry** with a special panel discussion organised as part of the **Night of Ideas** on **4 February**. Key players from both sides of the Channel will recount the genesis and challenges of this landmark collaboration.

On **25 February**, **Sophie Marnette**, Professor of Medieval French Studies, and **Helen Swift**, Professor of Medieval French Literature at the University of Oxford, will explore the origins and oral style of the ***Chanson de Roland***, the distinctive voice of its narrator, its ideological values, and **the ways in which it turns its characters into iconic figures**. The earliest complete surviving Anglo-Norman manuscript version of the poem is held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

The presence of only six women in the Bayeux Tapestry raises questions about women's role in times of war and conquest. **Elisabeth van Houts**, Honorary Professor of European Medieval History at the University of Cambridge, will discuss **what the Bayeux Tapestry can tell us about medieval women** in a special lecture taking place on **18 May**.

French artist Hélène Delprat will present her own **“missing piece” of the Bayeux Tapestry**, created at the Cité internationale de la tapisserie in Aubusson – a 25m² panel that will first be exhibited at **Westminster Abbey**, where William was crowned King of England on 25 December 1066, before taking its place at the Château de Falaise in Normandy, the putative birthplace of William the Conqueror, in spring 2027.

A **programme of films** exploring the Middle Ages, its history and its iconic figures will also be on offer, alongside a **concert** with the **a Capella trio Les Itinérantes** and violinist **Théotime Langlois de Swarte**, showcasing **music from the medieval repertoire**.

Audiences will be invited to take part in **embroidery and illumination workshops**, as well as a **medieval ball evoking the world of the courts in which troubadours and jesters once performed** (**4 December**).

A programme of events for young people **will also run throughout the season, notably as part of the South Ken Kids Festival (March 2027)**. Young visitors will dress up and dance at a medieval costumed ball, discover the art of storytelling and illustration in a creative workshop with Nina Chakrabarti, and help create a giant participative scroll inspired by the tapestry itself. Through hands-on activities, games and creativity, children and families will explore the people, stories and traditions of the Middle Ages in a fun and immersive way.

[Programme](#)

Venue: Institut français, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT

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