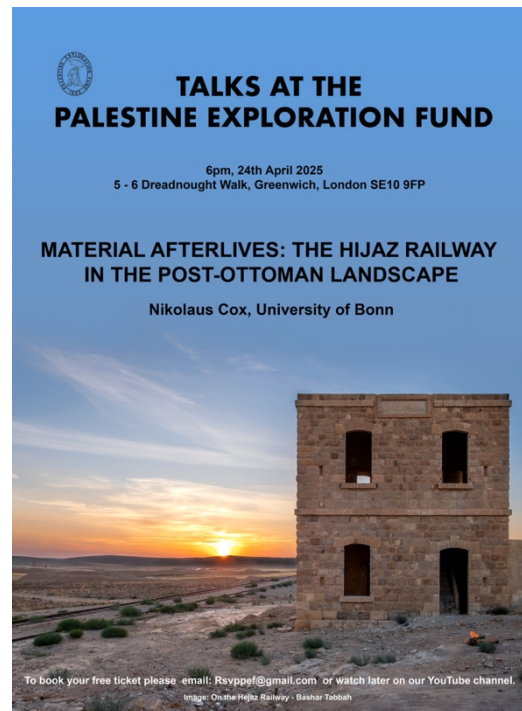


PEF EVENT

Thursday 24th April 2025, 6pm

MATERIAL AFTERLIVES: THE HIJAZ RAILWAY IN THE POST-OTTOMAN LANDSCAPE

- Nikolaus Cox, University of Bonn
- PEF, 5-6 Dreadnought Walk, Greenwich, London SE10 9FP
- Free, please email rsvppef@gmail.com to reserve your ticket/s



[Download Poster](#)

More information

The Hijaz Railway is infamous for its entanglement in the Great War and Arab Revolt. However, Sultan Abdülhamid's 'Praiseworthy Railroad' was more than a target for the enemies of the Ottoman Empire – it was both a tool for controlling the indigenous populations of the empire's southern provinces and a piece of sacralised modernity, burdened with the holy purpose of transporting the faithful from Damascus to the Holy Cities of the Hijaz. Even after its extensive destruction in the latter years of the Great War, the railway still maintained a nuanced and discursive relationship with the local populations of the nascent Emirate of Transjordan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In this talk, Nikolaus Cox examines the post-war material legacy of the Hijaz Railway in Arab lands. Cox discusses widespread cases of spoliation—wherein lengths of railway iron were recycled in the construction of local houses—and explores what this meant for the continued forced sedentarisation of southern Transjordan's Bedouin population. This process of settling the nomad began in the final century of Ottoman rule, at a time when the region was widely documented by the PEF, and continued into the post-war period. It is the photographic archives of the PEF that best-illustrate the dramatic demographic changes that manifested across southern Transjordan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and offer clues to the unusual role the disused Praiseworthy Railroad played in these changes.

About the speaker

Nikolaus Hochstein Cox is an archaeologist and Islamic Archaeology PhD candidate at the University of Bonn who has excavated sites in the Kingdoms of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. His research focuses on the Ottoman Empire, specifically the material-cultural record of imperial-indigenous interactions in the empire's Arab provinces. He has written on the archaeological legacy of the Hajj Road as well as the methodology of excavating 'modern' archaeology in the context of 20th century military and industrial installations.

HOW TO FIND US

THE PEF is situated on the south bank of the River Thames, 5 minutes' walk from the Cutty Sark. It is accessible by DRL at Cutty Sark and Greenwich stations, the Overground at Greenwich station, and by Riverbus at Greenwich Pier.

