

“The Parting of the Desert” The Building of the Suez Canal: 1859-1869

A talk by Major General Stephen Carr-Smith

Friday 23rd January 2026

Doors open at 7.30 p.m. Talk begins at 8 p.m.

Paying bar available

Tickets £10 available online at www.trybooking.com/uk/FMIC

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The building of the Suez Canal was both a marvel of engineering construction, and the symbolic meeting of East and West. It was the vision of Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French diplomat: whose enthusiasm won the vital backing of Louis Napoleon; whose perseverance overcame the British Prime Minister's determination to prevent the Canal's completion; and whose friendship with an 11 year old Egyptian boy, with a craving for spaghetti, paid dividends.

It was de Lesseps' pioneer spirit that eventually saw the project completed in 1869, after 15 years of ceaseless effort, both in planning and in construction. But he did it; and the desert was parted.