THE LADY SOAMES LG DBE • 1922-2014

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1999: Lady Soames at the home of Celia Sandys, Savernake Forest, Wiltshire, during a garden party hosted by Celia for the Tenth Churchill Tour, 1999.
We Will Treasure Her All Our Days

ROBERT HARDY

Chartwell, the hard winter of 1980-81: all round the Churchill house the roads were icy; snow was thick across the Weald of Kent. The house was full of action, with a large film crew, actors, noise, equipment, lights, cables, slush turning to mud, as we worked on the eight-hour script of Southern Films’s *The Wilderness Years*, in which I was striving, against the odds, to be the Rt Hon Winston Churchill.

Mary Soames suddenly arrived to see what was happening in the house where she grew up, laying bricks with her father, loving him absolutely. We met among the chaos and cables in the hall, between Churchill’s painting of flowers in a silver vase and the stand of his canes and sticks. She looked bewildered, regarded me and said: “The suit is about right—goodness, what a mess!”

I asked if she would like to come to my trailer in the snow on the lawn and ease her shock with a whisky. Once inside she examined me more closely: “That bow tie arrangement is very good. Papa seldom got it really neat.” Suddenly she took my hand, gazed at the ring I wore and said, “What’s that? Where did you get it?”

I took the ring from the third finger of my right hand, where Churchill wore his, and gave it to her. I explained that I had this copy made by Garrards, who told me they knew all about the Churchill ring. I think they had made the original, certainly repaired it. On the almost square bezel the Spencer and Churchill crests were cut deep.

Mary was astonished: “Oh my goodness, we used to tease Papa, as children—slip it off his finger while he snoozed and hide it. He would feign rage, in the end find it, and play ‘Bear’ with us under the table.”

After her visit I sent her a telegram: “A bright gleam has caught the hopes of our enterprise, and warmed and cheered all our hearts.” From then on we kept in touch, and when the filming finished, realising I could no longer wear the ring, I wondered if I dared, and finally did dare, to offer it to Mary. I told her I would leave it at Garrards, where if she cared to have it she might go one day and collect it for herself. Not really expecting a response, in two days I got a wondrous letter from her, from which I quote:

> “16th September 1981
> “My dear Mr Hardy [a touching mixture of formality and friendliness]: I called upon Mr Argles at Garrards last Friday and—do you know—the ring fits my (rather large) finger perfectly—so I hope I did right. I wore it away from the shop and it has not left my finger (3rd right hand) since.”

Timothy Sydney Robert Hardy CBE, for thirty years an Honorary Member of The Churchill Centre and Societies, is broadly acknowledged as the most accomplished actor ever to play the role of Winston Churchill, beginning with *The Wilderness Years* (1981), for which he received a BAFTA award. He has frequently participated in conferences and events, making notable addresses at the Reform Club during the Second Churchill Tour in 1985 and at the 1992 Churchill Conference in San Francisco. We last honored him (*Finest Hour* 148: 9) on his 85th birthday in 2010. His presence among us honors us much more. RML • PHOTOGRAPH AND ARTWORK BY WOOTTON VILLAGE TALKS WWW.WOOTONTALKS.CO.UK
“I find it very difficult to thank you at all adequately for a really heartwarming thought. I am deeply moved. In these rather difficult days for us it has given me courage to wear the replica of the ring my beloved father wore for all the years I knew him, in good times and in bad; it has been like a talisman—and will continue to be so.

“I have of course been gripped by the first two episodes of The Wilderness Years and I think it is very good. It is such a relief to feel one is watching something which strives at every turn to be near the truth.”

What she in her kindness said of my own attempt made me feel I was forgiven for all presumptions. She continued:

“It is of course very hard for the generations who knew them all, and hardest for those who knew them well, to be detached....But I say to people, these are not reflections in a glass, these are images and how true and real the imagery is should be the test. So far I find it wonderfully interpreted, and I can see how you have studied him and got inside him. I was terribly tensed up before the first episode, and now I look forward with a confident interest to the next ones....my sister Sarah with whom I compare notes shares my views. Thank you with all my heart for your wonderful gift which will be a constantly worn and treasured possession to me all my days.”

From that time on I have so many memories of times spent with this great lady: aristocratic, straightforward, generous, open-hearted, gentle, able to be sharp—I have been told on occasions “don’t be so silly!”—humorous, witty, poised, loyal, with an extraordinary ability to get people to meet others with whom she thought they would become friends.

I felt her courage very soon after the death of Christopher, her husband, in 1987. I was driving her round Hyde Park Corner, and asked if she felt up to all that was on her plate that day. “Yes, if I concentrate on what I have to do, and on other people, all is pretty well, but you’re right, it’s miserable.”

We flew together to the 1990 Churchill Conference in San Francisco. At Heathrow we splashed out and bought expensive caviar for the journey; at the gate, after one look at Mary, they upgraded us to first class. The fun and conversation only ceased when Mary’s eyes closed and sleep came, as it did often in restaurants, increasingly as the years passed, withdrawals abruptly ended when Mary rejoined the conversation as if she had missed no part of it.

Many times we would be together with Celia Sandys, her niece, and their family at their house in the depths of Savernake Forest. Celia is a true friend and her youngest son Alexander is my godson. There were dog walks there and in London, visits to exhibitions...at one, as I arrived, she held out her arms and said “Papa!”

I remember her seventieth birthday party where her son Nicholas gave the best family tribute I have ever heard, and the wittiest; and my eightieth birthday party nine years ago, where her cigars astonished a few.

There was a weekend in Yorkshire with the Peels, her son-in-law and her daughter Charlotte: Mary said to me, “Let’s go for a walk”; soon she stopped and said: “I want to tell you a secret, a very exciting secret. The Queen has given me the Order of the Garter, just like Papa. Isn’t that wonderful? I’m so excited!”

I asked if she was now a Knight of the Garter, a KG: “Goodness I don’t know, I simply must find out!” Her son-in-law knew: she would be a Lady of the Garter, an LG. I was honoured beyond measure she had told me, and the awe I always held her in deepened.

Now she has left us. She and her Papa used to have quite emulous cigar competitions, to see whose ash could be kept unbroken longest. I have had a feeling that when her ash truly outlasted his she would slip away to join those she loved and missed. I wish she had not decided to go, but it is what she needed. We who are left will treasure her all our days.”
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The Churchill Centre was founded in 1968 to inspire leadership, statesmanship, vision and courage through the thoughts, words, works and deeds of Winston Spencer Churchill. Global membership numbers over 2500, including affiliated societies in many nations. (A complete listing is on our website.) The Churchill Centre is devoted to scholarship and welcomes both critics and admirers. Its academic advisers and editorial board include leading writers on Churchill’s life and times. The Centre publishes the quarterly Finest Hour and a monthly e-newsletter, the Chartwell Bulletin; sponsors international and national conferences; and answers research queries from students and scholars worldwide, guiding them to sources they need in their quest for knowledge of Winston Churchill’s life and times.
For the first time in its history *Finest Hour* has broken its regular schedule to produce a special edition in memory of Lady Soames, our Patron from 1983 until May 31st last.

It is hard for me to put into words the sense of generational loss we all feel. As I watched the so-recent images of those remaining veterans who made it back to Normandy on the 70th anniversary of Operation Overlord, I was saddened to reflect that they will soon have passed too, and the live and vivid memories of those tumultuous and terrible times will have gone with them.

Mary Soames’s passing less than a fortnight before that anniversary is also a cause for grief, despite the knowledge of an amazing life, so well and fully lived. All who have had the privilege of knowing her share the pain of her loss and the loss of all she represented so well. Over the past decade and a half I had the immense pleasure of spending increasing amounts of time with her, and always enjoyed and learned from her company.

Mary was the most amazing link with history. We are blessed that her sixth and final book, *A Daughter’s Tale*, published so presciently, paints a vivid and personal picture of those times which no historian could match. So few tenuous links to Sir Winston now remain. It is very worrying and thus it remains vital for Churchillians “to keep the memory green and the record accurate,” as she put it, objectively and without hagiography.

It is very clear to me that we at The Churchill Centre and as Churchillians must work increasingly hard to ensure that his life, times and legacy remain well known, despite the loss of such strong links as Mary Soames. As I read the newspapers and watch the onslaught of information from around the world, it is equally clear to me that the lessons learned from Churchill are incredibly important and it is our duty to find ways and means of translating them into daily relevance, ensuring that leadership everywhere will at least have the opportunity to learn the lessons he taught us, the good to be gained from knowing of his experiences.

Lady Soames will be missed not only by her family, not only by all who remember her, but by all who knew of her as her parents’ much-loved daughter. Her life will be admired, respected, celebrated and never forgotten. I shall miss my friend, and shall do everything I can always to ensure that her memory is fresh, vibrant and much feted—as indeed she was.

Mr. Geller is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Churchill Centre.
Mary Soames was the last surviving child of Winston and Clementine Churchill, and the only one of their five children who really came to terms with bearing that distinguished family name. She enjoyed a fulfilled life as daughter, wife and mother before blossoming into an accomplished writer. She inherited her father’s energy and determination, while also displaying her mother’s charm and poise. But the empathy, ebullience and sense of fun were all her own.

Mary was born on 15 September 1922, the same month that her father bought Chartwell, his beloved country house on the edge of the Kentish Weald. She was by far the most junior of the surviving Churchill children (the infant Marigold having died in 1921)—eight years younger than Sarah, the next oldest. She was therefore brought up almost as an only child.

Her older siblings, Diana, Randolph and Sarah, had known a succession of homes, but Mary’s formative years were spent entirely at Chartwell. There she revelled in country life, particularly horses, and developed a lifelong love of gardening. And, whereas her brother and sisters had suffered a series of governesses, she was raised largely by Clementine’s young cousin, Maryott Whyte, who joined the Churchill household as a nanny at Mary’s birth and stayed for over twenty years. “Nana” became the centre of Mary’s youth and the nurturer of her lifelong Christian faith.

Relations with her parents were at this stage admiring rather than intimate. If Clementine made a suggestion, Mary’s instinctive reaction was: “I must ask Nana.” But in the winter of 1935-36, conscious of the distance >>

Dr. Reynolds is the author of the seminal work, In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War (2007) and is Professor of International History and a Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge. This text is slightly amended from an obituary first published in The Guardian on 2 June 2014.
Mary described herself as a “child of consolation,” the product of her parents’ grief at their daughter Marigold’s premature death in 1921. She grew up at Chartwell, revelling in country life, and developed a lifelong love of gardening.

DAVID REYNOLDS...

between them, her mother took Mary skiing in Austria, and this became an annual fixture on the family calendar. “It was chiefly during these lovely skiing holidays,” Mary later wrote, “that I started to know my mother more as a person than a deity.”

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, Mary followed her parents to London. Then, during the Blitz, she was packed off to Chequers, the prime minister’s country retreat in Buckinghamshire. Keen for more of the action, she joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in September 1941 and served in one of the new “mixed” anti-aircraft batteries. Life in tents and draughty barracks was a marked change from her privileged life to date. At one army dance, she teased an American soldier about his big feet, whereupon he put her over his knee and gave her “about thirty good-natured whacks.” His buddy told *Time* magazine: “She’s a regular guy and, like her old man, can take it.”

Mary’s battery served in London and on the coast during the V-bomb raids of 1944, before moving on to Belgium and Germany. Excitement of a different sort came from travelling abroad as her father’s aide-de-camp. In the summer of 1943 she went to Quebec and Washington; returning from Quebec on *HMS Renown*, she was almost washed overboard in a heavy sea. In July 1945 she accompanied Winston Churchill to Potsdam for the final summit of World War II with President Truman and Marshal Stalin.

On 25 July, during a break in the conference, father and daughter flew back to London for the results of the general election. The Conservative Central Office remained confident of victory; Mary even left half her luggage behind at Potsdam. But the election proved a Labour landslide and for a while, Winston and Clementine were close to a nervous collapse as they struggled to construct a new life in the vacuum following the fall from power—the sudden absence of red boxes, of the sense of urgency and purpose. Mary, demobilized in April 1946, was particularly helpful to her mother as they reopened Chartwell and set up a new home in London.

Her personal life blossomed. After a whirlwind romance, she and Christopher Soames (later Baron Soames), a Coldstream Guards officer, were married in February 1947 in St. Margaret’s, Westminster, the same church as her parents thirty-nine years before. Clementine took some persuading—she had talked Mary out of a rash engagement in 1941. But on their honeymoon Christopher was taken ill with a duodenal ulcer, whereupon Clementine proposed that he retire from the Army, live in the farmhouse down the hill from Chartwell, and take over running the estate. So Mary returned to her Kentish roots, this time with a home and family of her own.
Between 1948 and 1959 Mary gave birth to three sons and two daughters. She also supported her husband’s political career as a Conservative MP for Bedford (1950-66), campaigning vigorously on his behalf. After he lost his seat, she accompanied him on a series of foreign appointments, particularly relishing her time as hostess in the splendid Paris Embassy (1968-72). The couple were in Brussels from 1973 to 1976, when Christopher was the first British vice-president of the European Commission.

Between December 1979 and April 1980, when Christopher was the last Governor of Southern Rhodesia, the close personal bond forged by the Soamases with Robert Mugabe and his wife was essential for the reasonably smooth transfer of power. Mary felt the subsequent fate of Zimbabwe almost as a personal betrayal.

But another Mary was about to bloom. Sir Winston, who died in 1965, was the subject of a multi-volume biography, started by his son Randolph and being completed by the historian Martin Gilbert. Christopher suggested that Mary should write a life of her mother Clementine, and Mary took up the idea with enthusiasm. Before her death in 1977, Clementine herself had read all the draft chapters up to the Great War.

Mary was touched and delighted with the commission, but also a little daunted, having “never before written so much as a pamphlet,” as she admitted in the preface. Yet Clementine Churchill was published in 1979 to enormous acclaim, winning the Wolfson Prize and plaudits from reviewers. A.J.P. Taylor called it “a delightful book… affectionate and also frank.” It was indeed this remarkable mixture of feeling and detachment that made the book so appealing. Mary showed how much her mother had done to sustain Winston’s career— “my life’s work,” as she had put it. But the book also revealed the intense strains this imposed on Clementine’s highly strung nature.

Suddenly Mary was recognised as her father’s as well as her mother’s daughter, with a good deal of Sir Winston’s literary talent. Other books followed, including a notable work on her father’s paintings, a widely read collection of her parents’ letters, and an autobiography up to 1945, drawing on her extensive diaries. (See book reviews, pages 20-25.)

In 1989 Mary was appointed chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Theatre, a political appointment, greeted without enthusiasm in thespian circles. The Soamases had not been theatre-goers and, during an early meeting Mary pushed a note to the NT’s director, Richard Eyre: “Who is Ian McKellen?” But she threw herself into the new task in a typical hands-on way, developing a keen interest in the theatre, and Eyre found her an invaluable supporter. At her farewell party in 1995, he said how much he would miss her “gossip, guidance, champagne, 7:45 am phone calls, enthusiasm, wisdom and friendship.” She replied: “You go too far, but then you often do, dear Richard.”

Behind the scenes, she quietly maintained a concern for former members of the family’s staff and championed many public Churchill causes, not least the Archives Centre at Churchill College, Cambridge, where she was elected an Honorary Fellow. She was also the assiduous Patron of The Churchill Centre, attending its gatherings and talking freely and informally with all who attended. On one occasion, asked to present a VIP with a picture of Chartwell that had unfortunately failed to arrive, she carried off the potential embarrassment with great aplomb, imaginatively recreating the beauties of the picture with a verve and humour that delighted the whole audience.

Mary described herself as a “child of consolation,” product of Winston and Clementine’s grief at their daughter Marigold’s premature death in 1921. In due time, she consoled her parents, supported her husband and nurtured her children. But she also developed a distinctive voice of her own as a woman and an author. ☛
**HMS Renown, 1943**

“You look like a gang of bloody pirates.” —WSC

Greenock, Scotland, September 1943: Mary Churchill thanks Renown’s captain for a safe voyage (notwithstanding that she was almost washed overboard). Her father is at far right; behind her left shoulder is WSC’s naval aide Cdr. Tommy Thomson.

I send my condolences to the family of Lady Soames, the vivacious passenger I so well remember aboard HMS Renown on a transatlantic adventure long ago. I am proud to say that we scanned the Atlantic 24/7 whilst the family slept safely in their cabins.

On 12 August 1943, as an 18-year-old radar operator, I boarded HMS Renown in Scapa Flow. On the 24th we set sail across the North Atlantic into the teeth of a hurricane—my first long voyage in the Royal Navy. We had no escort, since she was a fast ship, which would easily have outdistanced any accompanying cruisers.

My cruising station was a surface warning radar set atop the mast, 95 feet in the air, reached by a steel ladder. Everything was secret and we had no idea where we were going. We finally arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the captain told us we were to pick up a VIP. We were only supposed to stay twenty-four hours, but the Italians had just capitulated, which apparently delayed our guest a bit longer. We finally sailed on 14 September 1943, carrying our VIP, the Prime Minister, along with his wife and daughter.

The PM was returning to Britain from the “Quadrant” conference with Roosevelt, which fixed Anglo-American strategy for the final stages of the war. He had spent over a month in Roosevelt’s company at Quebec, the White House and Hyde Park. (See Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill VI*, Chapter 30.)

Mr. Humphries, RN (ret.), lives in Hamilton Hill, Western Australia. This article is excerpted and updated from his recollections of two Renown voyages carrying the Prime Minister, published in *Finest Hour* 113, Winter 2001-02.
The vivacious Miss Churchill, a treat to have aboard, celebrated her 21st birthday with a large cake. More precarious and worrying was when she and a naval officer went onto the quarterdeck, awash in heavy seas. Here the future Patron of The Churchill Centre was nearly swept overboard. Her father tapped her on the arm and told her to use more sense!

The Prime Minister came into our recreation area as we were playing “Tombola” (Bingo). We all stopped and stood to attention. Observing our varied types of warm clothes, which we always wore at sea in lieu of uniforms, he smiled and said, “You look like a gang of bloody pirates.”

As we arrived at the entrance to the Clyde in a dense fog, the ship was under radar control going up the river, which we traversed at 27 knots, constantly taking ranges and bearings until we dropped anchor. Radar was fairly new, and Mr. Churchill, impressed by this performance, asked to see the men responsible. The navigation officer and operators including this writer were summoned and he congratulated us on a job well done. He shook my hand. I haven’t washed it since.

Before leaving Renown, Mr. Churchill addressed our ship’s company and then attended Divine Service. Sir Martin Gilbert quotes his then-secretary, Elizabeth Layton (later TCC/ICS Honorary Member Elizabeth Nel), who wrote: “I must say I’ve seldom felt so moved by anything, those dear sailors lined up, the Old Man singing away, the Padre in his robes (he was a marvellous man), the few (brass) instruments forming a small band which somehow sounded very quiet and touching.”

The final summit conference of World War II was held in Potsdam in Soviet-occupied Germany. As its site, the Russians chose the once-luxurious and relatively unscathed suburb of Babelsberg, giving two days’ notice to residents to clear out (never to return).

Frau Gerick, owner of Villa Urbig, and her 16-year-old niece Marie Louise, moved in with relatives in what remained of their home in Berlin. Their gardener stayed behind, told them who was in their house, and managed to bring them some personal items they had left behind.

Forty-five years later, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification of Germany, repossession of the villas was offered, given proof of ownership or inheritance, a token payment of one deutschmark, and the owner’s agreement to restore and live in the property. Neither >
Gericke nor her sister could afford to restore the villa, so it was turned over to the government and purchased by a German businessman as a wedding present for his bride. They restored the 10,000-square-foot villa to its appearance in the 1930s, including the artistic forest scene wallpaper in the dining room. The Berlin Wall had actually stood between the villa and the lake. When we were there the wall had been taken down and the area was heaps of dirt and rock. The owners were planning to landscape the grounds and to add a boat dock.

Mary Soames was a 22-year-old Army officer when she accompanied her father to Potsdam as his aide-de-camp. Her mother had charged her with taking good care of her war-weary father. Exhausted, upon arriving at the Villa Urbig, Churchill “flopped into a wicker chair and demanded a large whisky,” Mary recalled. “That was not typical of him. It was a very exciting time, but very worrying, since we didn’t know what was going to happen to Europe. I just tried to make myself useful round the house while all these important people were coming and going. I sort of acted as a bit of a hostess to my father.”

Lady Soames found the salmon-pink villa with a lawn running down to a lovely lake “just as I remember it.” There was a curved cement bench where Churchill would have private conversations. She remembered the difficulties, in a threadbare, defeated country, of even basic household tasks.

After being hosted at dinners by Truman and Stalin (“small, dapper, rather twinkly”), it was her turn to direct a dinner party for the Big Three. Flowers were a real problem. She found a few nondescript specimens on the ground.
I t is twenty years since I received my first letter of appreciation from Lady Soames, a few weeks after the opening of my first Churchill exhibition by the actor Robert Hardy at the Royal Arsenal Museum. I was touched by her deep interest in what we were doing, and received her letter of approval with deep pride.

I am among those fortunate enough to have met her on many occasions, not least in October 2000, when she came to open “Remember Winston Churchill,” an exhibit at the newspapers building at Kongens Nytorv, marking the 50th anniversary of her father’s visit to Copenhagen. As a little surprise, I collected her in the same Humber Super Snipe that had carried her father through the streets in 1950. We conveyed her to the Scandic Hotel, where she had a splendid 18th floor suite looking out over the city.

A few hours later we drove to the opening, where she was warmly greeted by a trumpet fanfare used by the World War II Danish Resistance. The invited audience included former Premier Paul Schlüter; Mærsk McKinney Møller of the Mærsk shipping line; the Churchill Club’s Knud Pedersen; British Ambassador Philip Astley; and René Højris, who lent part of his vast Churchilliana collection. Lady Soames gave a warm speech saying she was thrilled to see the affection that the Danish people still had for her father, and we toasted her with Pol Roger champagne.

The next day took her to the Oscar Nemon bust at the Churchill Park; the Museum of Danish Resistance, where her guide was the director Esben Kjeldbæk; and the royal treasury at Rosenborg Castle. After a private lunch with Mr. Mærsk McKinney Møller I met her at the beautiful Hotel d’Angleterre, opposite the Churchill exhibition, where she met Gunnar Dyrberg and Vagn Jespersen from “Holger Danske,” one of the most famous resistance groups in Copenhagen. I remember how excited they were to meet her.

Another memorable time with her was the 2006 UK Churchill Society tour to Potsdam, where she happily revisited the places she had been with her father. (See previous article.) I noticed that all the Germans we met were interested in talking to her, notably the former Chancellor, Dr. Helmut Kohl, who made an impressive and heartfelt dinner speech about Churchill and Europe.

In 2007 I was invited to Windsor Castle to attend the annual service of the Order of the Garter. The last time we met was at her home in Kensington in June of last year, welcomed like an old friend by Lady Soames and her cute dog. She seemed so ageless! It was fantastic to read about her amazing life in her 2011 memoir, A Daughter’s Tale. Lady Soames did so much for us Churchillians. Her pride in her father’s legacy was manifest, and she encouraged us all to keep the flame alive and the record true. I shall never forget our “special relationship.”

At the 2006 dedication, Mary handed the brass plaque to the owner’s wife, Monika Egger. Marie Louise Gericke, the former owner’s niece, now 81, was on hand too, and the first thing Mary said to her was: “I am so sorry you had to move out for us.” Marie had worked in the British Embassy in Washington for twenty years, so they had much in common. Together they engaged in long conversations. “It’s very much to my relief,” Mary added, “that you bear no ill-will towards me.”

Mr. Bjerre, a longtime Churchill Centre member and founder of the Danish Churchill Club, has organized several exhibits and events in Copenhagen. His account of the 2000 exhibition is in our website at: http://bit.ly/W7XM3S.
I write this in the week following the death of my mother: The Lady Soames LG DBE, to give her full and glorious title. I hope I can articulate from my brimming heart a few observations and memories of her without it tipping over into sentiment.

In the autumn of 1968, accompanied by our Labrador and Jim, my sister’s black pug, we all set off with my parents on the boat train to Paris. We were given a fabulous and rather tearful send off by, among others, my grandmother Clementine—you would have thought we were going to Timbuktu for five years. Eight hours later we arrived at our new home, the British Embassy in Paris, a beautiful building near the Elysee Palace that was once the home of Napoleon’s sister.

My parents filled the house with flowers and laughter. They flung the most wonderful parties—a large dance for my brother and me, complete with a British rock band and another, grander and more sedate one for HM the Queen on a state visit to Paris. And every year they gave a magnificent lunch for many of the British who came over to watch the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe. Everyone was served a cold partridge wrapped in some exotic sauce, which impressed the French no end.

Mary Soames lived a truly extraordinary life in which she met T.E. Lawrence, Charlie Chaplin and Stanley Baldwin. And she was close to all the top brass who were running the war under the command of her father, from General Montgomery to “Prof” Lindemann. With her father she stayed at the White House with the Roosevelts, and attended the Potsdam conference, where she did the flowers and dined with Joseph Stalin.

She was driven by the most highly developed and old-fashioned sense of duty to Queen, country and family I’ve ever had the good fortune to come across. But this was tempered by an enormous sense of fun and enjoyment, as demonstrated in the Embassy.

Earlier, in 1964, she ended up having to fight the general election campaign for Christopher on her own, as he had fallen off a horse and broken his pelvis. I went with her round his Bedford constituency, where she gallantly canvassed from door to door, addressed meetings and visited factories. She set an extraordinary pace and one of my abiding memories of her is following her everywhere at a brisk trot as she would literally run down streets as though life were too short to spend walking from place to place.

Nothing demonstrates her sense of duty better than

This article first appeared in the July issue of Saga magazine, where The Hon. Emma Soames is editor-at-large. Her further reflections were broadcast by the BBC Radio 4 on June 6th; the podcast may be viewed at http://bbc.in/1uRRNfT.
the dilemma she faced at the beginning of the war. In her memoirs I found a passage demonstrating her agonising before she joined the ATS: “I did some real heart-searching as to where my duty lay. I knew my parents depended on me but...working at a hospital library seemed rather inadequate set alongside the challenges and sacrifices confronting so many.”

And goodness, did her sense of duty extend to family! In 1983, I gave birth to my daughter in Jerusalem, and my mother determined to come and help us. She turned up at our bungalow on the outskirts of the city, bearing soap and a pair of marigold gloves. Although cooking was never her forte, she took over the kitchen, produced some creditable shepherd’s pies, and did some very noisy washing-up. She was a great support to me and offered some terrible advice about looking after a very small baby. She was way outside her comfort zone, but flung herself into our life.

Of course, when the Israeli government heard she was in town, she was bombarded with invitations from the mayor and the government, but she turned them all down: at that time her duty lay with her daughter.

It wasn’t always all sunny between us, of course, and I was the recipient of some Exocet missiles she despatched to me over the years when my behaviour didn’t measure up. But she was staunch in her forgiveness and fiercely loyal to her children. She leaves behind a deeply united family determined to keep her memory burning brightly.

Mary Soames chaired the Royal National Theatre Board from 1988, during most of my time as director, and we became close friends. Her appointment was greeted by many people with surprise and by some with alarm. I heard it said by a Labour MP that her mandate would be to privatise the National Theatre, and by a Conservative that she was being put in to “sort out the pinkoes.”

My own response was one of curiosity: not so much as to why she had been chosen as to why she had accepted. She was not a regular theatre-goer and had no conspicuously advertised ambitions to hold public office. With hindsight I think Mary agreed because it was an adventure that she couldn’t refuse, and—perhaps an unsurprising thing to say about a Churchill—because it was her destiny. The National Theatre never had cause to regret her appointment, and neither, I think, did she.

Whatever apprehensions I may have had about Mary were dispelled during our first lunch together. “You’ll have to help me out,” she said with unaffected candour.

“I know absolutely nothing about the theatre. Christopher didn’t like going.” During the meal she revealed a sharp intelligence, marked with self-deprecating diffidence (“I know nothing about anything”), a remarkable memory for names and literary quotes, and a facility for telling anecdotes larded with perfectly recalled detail and dialogue.

They often featured her father and boasted a supporting cast that included Stalin, Roosevelt, General de Gaulle, Noël Coward, Robert Mugabe and all the Mitford sisters. She once asked me to dinner with Jessica Mitford (“Richard, dear, could you bear to come to dinner to break the ice?”) Mary hadn’t seen them since Jessica had eloped to the Spanish Civil War with Mary’s then sort-of-boyfriend, Esmond Romilly.

I was particularly taken by Mary’s ability to keep several sentences bouncing in the air at once, even while she dropped her handbag on the floor, picked up the contents, draped an errant tape measure round her neck, and continued as if this were the most natural thing >>
Richard Eyre...
in the world. I remember reading a newspaper profile of Mary before I met her. “She is a great giver,” it said. “The heart comes pouring out and when it reaches you it is warm.” No one who met her could doubt that.

I did help her out as she had requested, and in return she gave herself without reserve and without condition to the life of the National Theatre. She became an assiduous student of theatre politics, of plays, of styles of production, and of the sometimes bizarre and often self-indulgent behaviour of the people who made up the world she had joined. I found her taste—in plays and in acting—to be infallible, even if she was always tentative about asserting it, and she had an unerring ear, nose and eye, for the bogus. Her loyalty never wavered, and even when concerned by hostile criticism or bad box office, or provoked by artistic controversy—the mud bath in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the simulated gay sexual intercourse in Angels in America, the depiction of the Queen in A Question of Attribution—she remained steadfast in her support of the artistic policy.

She was not, in spite of her lineage, a natural politician or administrator; she had to work extraordinarily hard to succeed as she did at the job. She had an irreducible sense of duty, and endured without complaint a few financial crises, several bruising encounters with the architect Denys Lasdun, many Olivier award ceremonies, countless sponsorship occasions, and an infinity of meetings of the board, the finance and general purposes committee, the master plan sub-committee, the catering committee, the National Theatre development council, the National Theatre foundation, and the South Bank Theatre Board.

After Mary left the NT Board I’d meet her from time to time and we always fell on each other as old friends, hungry for gossip and comradeship. I saw her last a few weeks before she died. She was frail and her memory was intermittent, but she was still beautiful, and she still showed flashes of her old wit and great charm.

Whenever I go through Parliament Square I’ll always remember passing the statue of her father as we drove back together from the theatre—often late at night—and Mary saying: “Night, night, Papa.”

She told me once that late in his life, when he was frail and incommunicative, she had asked him if there was anything in his life that he had wanted to do but hadn’t, anything that he regretted. He replied: “I’d like my father to have lived long enough to have seen me do something good.” He would have been inordinately proud of his daughter.

The End of an Era

CELIA SANDYS

My memories of Mary cover so many years and so many places: Christmases at Chequers and Chartwell; staying at the British Embassies in Paris, where I got married for the second time, and in Washington D.C.; Churchill conferences; New Years’ Eves in Wiltshire; and travels on three continents.

Although she was always a major figure in our family life, it was in later years that we really got to know each other.

In 1993, we both attended the
his friends that he was making a charitable donation. An enormous donor had remarried and had sent a card informing him that there would be no caviar this Christmas as the generous donor had remarried and had sent a card informing his friends that he was making a charitable donation instead of the customary lavish gift. Mary was most apologetic and said that she would be arriving with foie gras instead if she was still welcome! Of course she was. We loved the caviar but we loved Mary more!

After Grandpapa died, for the rest of her life, my grandmother became the focal point of our family life. For nearly forty years Mary has been the cement that has bound the family together with love, laughter, friendship and respect.

“What would Mary think about that?” was a constant question. A question it was unwise to ask unless one was prepared to accept her answer.

When I started writing about the father with whom she was so close and she loved so dearly, Mary’s approval was crucial. She was generous with praise and gentle with criticism and always happy to deal with my endless questions that only she could answer.

I have countless memories of Mary. These bring back times of warm and loving family occasions at Chartwell, Chequers and Hyde Park Gate; Churchill conferences and events and travelling with her on three continents.

Most of my recollections are full of laughter and fun but some are tinged with emotion and tears.

I was staying near the Soames country house when my mother died. Mary and Christopher came early in the morning to break the news and drive me home.

A year later, together with Sarah, who was staying with me, we spent ten long days in and out of Hyde Park Gate as my grandfather’s life ebbed away. The three of us held hands as imperceptibly he slipped away to meet his Maker. A few years later Sarah too was gone.

One day Mary came to see me in my flat close to Buckingham Palace. I put her in a taxi and gave the driver her address. The driver who had given her a long and searching look said: “Who’ve I got in my cab? The Queen?” She thought this very funny.

People who didn’t know Mary thought that she must be very grand and old fashioned and were surprised by how down to earth, up-to-date and “normal” she was. She was a great listener and always made one feel that she really cared about what one was saying to her. This endeared her to everyone.

Mary will be greatly missed at Churchillian occasions where she always played a starring role.

She was not simply the matriarch of the Churchill family but of all the Churchill organisations with which she was so closely involved.

This is the end of an era.

We will miss her but our memories of her will live on forever.

Finest Hour 164 / 17
I first met Lady Soames in the Chartwell Kitchen Garden, miraculously, and on my very first visit. It was the summer of 1985, barely a year after the April 1984 opening of a tiny, Churchill-centric bookshop in New York City that I’d named for Churchill’s home in the Kent countryside—though I’d not yet even seen Chartwell myself. A summer book buying trip to England gave me the chance. Circumnavigating the verdant Kentish landscape and finally entering the house Churchill had so loved was poignant and electrifying. Following a giddy house tour, filled with an enveloping sense of his presence, I found myself drawn to the Kitchen Garden, where I sat quietly on a bench gazing out at the vista.

In the distance, a door opened and a solitary female figure emerged onto Chartwell’s manicured lawn terrace. I observed her without thought, as she made her way toward me. It is a rather long walk from the main house to Chartwell’s brick-walled gardens. Until she entered—through a gateway in the brickwork that her father the bricklayer had once helped to construct—I really hadn’t a clue who this red-coated stroller might be. Then I recognized her. It was Mary Soames.

We acknowledged one another; after all, we were alone together in a garden. I introduced myself and she, in turn, told me most offhandedly who she was, adding that she often stopped by to look in on her childhood home and visit with “Mrs. Hamblin”—Grace Hamblin—who had served both Winston and Clementine Churchill as private secretary, and who now watched over Chartwell as its first administrator.

Inevitably, I asked Lady Soames if I could take her picture. She smiled, yes. Inevitably, I also told her about Chartwell Booksellers. She was immediately full of questions: Could a bookstore really survive on her father’s books alone? Whatever had given me the idea? Exactly was this extraordinary place? Over the ensuing years, all of my re-encounters with Lady Soames seem, in my recollection, variations on our initial meeting. She always appeared unexpectedly and at a distance, visible through my store window, marching toward the shop alone and unannounced. Always she exuded the vivacity that I like to think she inherited from her father. Ever gracious, ever curious and utterly without pretense, she signed her own books at a gallop, thumbeded through anything that was new on the subject of Winston Churchill, and departed as she had come: alone.

Years later, when Lady Soames could no longer travel overseas, I came to possess a volume with a deeply personal connection to her. It was a First American edition of *The Gathering Storm*, the first volume in Churchill’s six-volume memoir of the Second World War, inscribed in ink on the front free endpaper: ”To Mary and Christopher from Papa, 1948.” This was Churchill’s inscription to his recently wed daughter; she had married Christopher Soames on 11 February 1947. There were, moreover, extensive notes in Lady Soames’s hand, penciled across the rear endpapers.

The moment the book arrived, I emailed Her Ladyship. Was this indeed hers? Had the book nefariously gone missing somehow from her library? At first she was mystified. In her library, she informed me, there was *The Gathering Storm* inscribed to her and Christopher by her father—but dated 1954. The mystification lifted somewhat when I mentioned one further detail. My copy had originally been acquired, I’d been told, together with another written by her father that was inscribed: ”Nana, love Christopher and Mary.”

“Nana’ was my mother’s first cousin,” wrote back Lady Soames, “Maryott Whyte, who looked after me very soon after my birth until the beginning of the war and who generally invigilated Chartwell in my parents’ absence.” I confess I had to look up that word, “invigilated.” Turns out it is something of a Britishism, meaning “to supervise candidates during an examination.”

Lady Soames would later write at affectionate >>
Mary Soames was a very important part of my family’s life. We so looked forward to her visits which were full of laughter and wonderful stories. After my father-in-law Randolph died in 1968 she took over his role and was always there for us, and I know she was always there as well for Arabella, who was young Winston’s half-sister. She came to all my children’s weddings. When Randolph and Catherine were married at Chartwell, which was the first family wedding that had ever been held there, she was full of advice.

A Long Weekend with Mary
We invited her for a lengthy weekend to our house in Lyme Regis, Dorset, together with my son Jack and a few friends for his birthday. Mary always loved the company of the young. She could be quite formidable in the nicest of ways. So we decided to have a project that might interest her. We had discovered that the MP for Lyme Regis was once the original Sir Winston Churchill, and that he lived in the next village of Musbury in a residence called Ashe House, where John Churchill, later first Duke of Marlborough, was born—or was he? We had heard that he could not have possibly been born at Ashe House, for it had been burnt to the ground and in fact was partially rebuilt forty years later.

Sir Winston was married to Elizabeth Drake, and they owned a Drake house nearby called Great Trill—so they moved there and this was where John was born. In Mary’s father’s biography, Marlborough: His Life and Times, the first chapter is entitled “Ashe House.” Now Simon, whom I live with, is slightly braver than me and mentioned to Mary that her father might have been wrong! This resulted in a very old-fashioned look from Mary. We spent the next few days examining church records, lists of births and various authoritative texts. We visited Ashe House and observed that only one wing of the original house had been rebuilt, in fact the old servants’ wing. We visited Great Trill and observed the Drake Crest on the building, the delightful owners confirming that John Churchill had in fact been born there. There are in fact two entries of his birth, one in Musbury and a second in the parish of Axminster, the location of Great Trill. We had a wonderful few days seeking the truth. At the end Mary exclaimed that “perhaps” we were right and her father was incorrect!

On one of the evenings, as we were enjoying the company of the young, there was a strange squeaking noise from outside. Mary asked what it was and I said that it was a baby Little Owl, calling for its mother. So, armed with a strong torch, we all went out into the garden, followed the noise, and there on a branch was the baby Little Owl. Just at that moment the mother owl arrived and fed it in front of us. Mary, who shared her father’s deep love of animals, was thrilled.

During this weekend Simon asked her if she minded him telling stories about her father, as he felt that Sir Winston was part of his life and history. She replied that of course he could talk about her father, but must always be accurate. This applies to us all: our personal history was formed by this great man.

Mary did not walk in her father’s shadow; she created her own sunshine and place in our hearts and lives. She will be missed with great sadness and affection but with the thought constantly in our minds: What would Mary say or do?


I offered to return the book to Lady Soames. “I would be very sorry to see you at a loss over it,” she replied, with characteristic magnanimity. “I therefore have no objection to your selling the book.”

I thanked her then, and I thank her now, one final time. She was an exquisite exponent of all that her father represented. She also was quite a lady.
Wife and Family

CHRISTOPHER H. STERLING


Lady Soames’s first book, this loving yet measured biography, recently updated with more illustrations, is a warmly readable account of Sir Winston’s “other half,” and the strong marriage that stretched from 1908 to 1965. Clementine survived him by a dozen years, through the centenary of his birth and beyond. Re-reading this account many years after the original is a delightful reintroduction to a formidable lady, without whom it is hard to imagine Winston Churchill accomplishing as much as he did.

The most startling “new” fact herein is that Henry Hozier was almost certainly not Clementine’s father. That was most likely the dashing but short-lived equestrian William George “Bay” Middleton, one of several lovers of the headstrong and passionate Blanche Hozier, who had an unhappy marriage. Lady Soames makes clear that while Clementine suspected toward the end of her life that Hozier was not her father, she never knew who was.

A strength of this book is its dependence not only on the author’s personal experience (she was certainly the closest to her parents of all the Churchill offspring), but on the massive correspondence among the family. Many letters between her parents are quoted, along with letters between Clementine and her children and other notables. The strength of the relationship between Winston and Clementine through thick and thin comes winningly through in their own words. Her letters also help the reader get behind the sometimes cool demeanor of the public Clementine.

For all her life she had somewhat fragile physical and psychological defenses with which to face the winds of a crowded life filled with pressures, occasional tragedies (such as the early death of her daughter Marigold in 1921) and the constant need to be supportive of a whirlwind named Winston. There is frequent reference to Clementine’s need to “get away” for breaks, for a few days up to a month or more.

The strong bond between them continued when they were apart, and with one exception, Clementine Churchill never feared to raise a difficult subject with her Winston. The exception came at the end, when Churchill understandably had a very rough time agreeing finally that he should retire from Parliament in 1964 so that his constituency could run an active Conservative candidate. Even here, Clementine worked with others behind the scenes to ease the way to the end of his spectacular career.

And Lady Soames knows how best to paint a scene—her description of the funeral of Sir Winston is very moving, as are the pages relating her mother’s final years. >>
Clementine Churchill...
Their daughter tells us much about Clementine’s reactions to Winston’s friends. Clearly, she feared the harm his more free-wheeling comrades might cause him, even unwittingly. For example, at first she long held a jaundiced view of Max Beaverbrook, the swashbuckling Canadian press lord, only coming around to admire “the Beaver” late in life. On the other hand, she was most fond of “The Prof” (Frederick Lindemann), the sometimes bumptious Field Marshal Montgomery (who took her call-outs with good grace), and the often difficult Charles de Gaulle, with whom she conversed in flawless French.

Do you need this new edition if you have the original? I would argue yes, for at least two reasons—it is physically easier to read, thanks to the larger type; and it contains Mary Soames’s most considered and complete view of her mother’s life a generation after Lady Churchill’s passing. In a word, bravo.


What a delight this book is! Long one of my favorites, it stands with Randolph Churchill’s Churchill: His Life in Photographs (1955) and Martin Gilbert’s Churchill: A Photographic Portrait (1974).

Melding careful photo selection with insightful captions, the book is drawn largely from the author’s own records and the albums of her mother, with input from many other collections. The 429 photos trace more than a century from Sir Winston’s parents to his great-grandchildren. A few pictures are familiar, but many are not.

Only a family member could add such images to the Churchill saga. Most photos in the public domain have been used so many times that to print them again seems almost superfluous. Lady Soames, with few exceptions (and these are needed for continuity), has no truck with old chestnuts. The ten sections trace Sir Winston’s life from his childhood to Clementine’s widowhood. They include cartoons, drawings, paintings, letters, and newspaper or magazine headlines and pictures. Nor are they all about people. Some show places (such as Chartwell, Chequers, or Cabinet War Rooms), other events (notably VE Day), and private occasions like birthday celebrations.

The combination of public and private moments is appealing, providing a feel for life as the Churchills lived it. Some of the captions range up to a half page of text, and are often frank in relating what happened to those shown. Little conversational asides add to the informality.

A Journey Worth the Taking

Richard M. Langworth


This book is about unimportant people,” our author explains, “but I have found my dramatic personae every bit as interesting in their characters and emotions, in the complexities of their relationships, and in the events of their lives, as those of the...central figures in the history of the Marlborough dynasty.”

A reader correctly summarizes: This is “an interesting sketch of the author’s >>
Lady Soames Takes on the Brush

MERRY N. ALBERIGI


Only two previous books were published on Churchill’s paintings, one of them by himself, yet painting was a vital element over half his life. His artistic talent emerged at age 40, following his dismissal from the Admiralty during the Dardanelles crisis in 1915. Painting distracted him from despair then, and became his faithful companion for more than forty years.

Mary Soames chronicles this very personal aspect of her father’s story as only she could, by weaving his hobby of painting into his life as a statesman, husband and father. He lived in another time of world wars, of house parties, of trips abroad for one’s health, and of painting into his life as a statesman, parties, of trips abroad for one’s health, despair then, and became his faithful companion for more than forty years.

And yet, for his Duchess Susan, there was something more....

She was an obscure figure, elusive to historians, but she has one thing none of her predecessors had—and none of her successors, as yet: “In the Chapel at Blenheim—where God Himself must mind His precedence—high up on the wall opposite the towering monument to the Great Duke, is a seemly marble memorial tablet to Susan, placed there by her only surviving child...no other Duchess is so commemorated, not even the tremendous Sarah. It is a monument also to filial piety—and, maybe, remorse.” That is “an element of ironic justice,” our author concludes. It also reminds us of the filial piety she herself consistently expressed through her own grand life.

Ms. Alberigi was a Governor of The Churchill Centre and chaired two outstanding conferences, San Francisco in 1990 and Washington in 1993. This review is reprinted from FH 69, Winter 1990-91.

dotes. The book begins in May 1915 when, dismissed, shattered and depressed, he turned to oils to combat his demons. Over the next forty-five years Churchill was to paint more than 500 oils, half of them during the 1930s, which Lady Soames considers the peak of his skills.

While his principal theme was landscapes, she writes, sometimes the weather would dictate still lifes to be painted indoors. “Bottlescape,” one of the best of these, hangs at Chartwell, and several others are shown in this profusely illustrated book with its brilliant color plates. The author judges his floral paintings especially successful because he “fully captured the ‘personalities’ of his subjects.” To her own appraisals are added those of his many artist friends.

Churchill was particularly intrigued by the play of light and shadow and was drawn to strong, bright colors. Thus he found great enjoyment on the French Riviera and in Marrakesh.
Morocco. His daughter accompanied him on many of these trips, sometimes as his aide-de-camp, and her stories are of holidays that “flowed in an agreeable sequence of painting sorties.” On his return home, he “would line up all the canvases he had painted around the room, usually standing on the floor and leaning against the furniture. Then he would make my mother sit next to him and show them to her, explaining where each picture had been painted and any problems he had had with it; other members of the family, and guests, would also be welcome at this ‘exhibition’ of his works.”

Though his art enjoyed praise from family and friends, Churchill himself was “genuinely unconceited about his efforts.” She cites several instances of his exhibiting his work anonymously or under a pseudonym.

This book’s strength lies in careful editing: the author provides a good sense of time and place, and wisely includes events that had a direct bearing on her father’s painting. So as not to disturb the book’s continuity, she uses endnotes and footnotes to add the background of people discussed. These include the many professional painters he called friends, and who filled a dual role as mentors and instructors. One of the most important was William Nicholson, whom Clementine admired, writing WSC: “I love to think of you painting sparkling sun-lit scenes….Are you keeping them cool & pale a la Nicholson?” Winston responded: “I have painted four pictures…[one], a la Nicholson—v[er]y luminous. It is the best I think I have yet done.”

These pages offer invaluable historical material, including a fascinating list of where the paintings hang today, who owned the grand homes where Churchill painted, and what relationship he had with his hosts. The sixty exacting color reproductions, chosen to illustrate his themes, techniques and variety, are proof of his expertise. With their large format and high quality one can fully appreciate the intensity of colors and recognize the texture and brush strokes.

The American dust jacket bears the same painting (“Green Trees and Poppies at Lullenden”) as the original jacket of Peter Coombs’s Churchill: His Paintings; the British jacket has a fine photo of Churchill painting in France in 1939, which is more distinctive. Inside are the same finely printed pages, adding much to Lady Soames’s father’s life that only she could know, exposing an unusual side of the great man with a fine appreciation of the vital role painting played in his life.

**Highly Professional Skills, Gracefully Worn**

**PAUL ADDISON**


In the fifty-six years of married life Winston and Clementine Churchill were often apart, Winston often in search of action and adventure. Clementine too was affected by wanderlust, and sometimes set off for distant parts, leaving Winston at home. In 1935 she sailed away for a three-month cruise to the Far East. VE-Day found her in Moscow at the end of a tour of the Soviet Union. Whenever apart they exchanged long letters, supplemented by occasional notes and telegrams. Hence this remarkable edition of 800 exchanges out of some 2000 between them, which opens with a letter from Mr. Winston Churchill to Miss Clementine Hozier on 16 April 1908, and closes with a note from Clemmie to Winston on 18 April 1964.

Mary Soames is a fine editor. Her unrivalled knowledge of the subject is complemented by literary and historical skills which are gracefully worn but highly professional. Through footnotes linking passages and biographical notes she dispenses just the right amount of background information.

As she explains in the Preface, many of the letters have been published before, Clemmie’s in Lady Soames’s own life of her mother, Winston’s in the official biography. Nevertheless there is little sense of déjà vu. In bringing together both sides of the correspondence and eliminating everything else, she reveals as never before the inside story of a marriage that was a great political partnership.

It was, of course, a marriage of its time. At the wedding Clemmie prom-
ised to love, honour and obey. Capable and intelligent, a strong supporter of female sufrage, she sacrificed much of her own potential for a husband who never sought to disguise his egotism or his absorption in the masculine world of politics. Yet the marriage worked for a simple reason, tenderly and movingly expressed in their letters. Winston and Clemmie married for love and the passing of time served only to strengthen the bonds between them.

When Winston began to court the beautiful Miss Hozier in 1908, he was backward with the opposite sex. In one of his earliest letters to Clemmie he wrote of his cousin Sunny: “He is quite different from me, understanding women thoroughly, getting into touch with them at once, & absolutely dependent on feminine influence of some kind for the peace & harmony of his soul. Whereas I am stupid & clumsy in that relation, & naturally quite self-reliant and self-contained.”

The letters between them in the aftermath of Gallipoli, when Winston was in the trenches on the verge of despair and she was at home fearing he would be killed, display the devotion which enabled them to ride out storms. “We are still young,” Clemmie writes, “but Time flies stealing love away and leaving only friendship which is very peaceful but not stimulating or warming.” “Oh my darling,” Winston replies, “do not speak of ‘friendship’ to me—I love you more with each month that passes.”

Winston and Clementine wrote for one another’s eyes only, dashing off lively, spontaneous accounts of children, friends, relations, births, weddings, funerals, anxieties about money and health. It is fascinating to see great historical events in the subplot of a family history. Mussolini, for example, turns up as a most charming guest at a tea party during a holiday visit by Clemmie to Rome.

Readers are bound to be struck by the fact that Winston and Clemmie took so many holidays apart, yet wrote frequently to explain how much they missed one another. Here perhaps, was one of the secrets of a long and happy marriage: they didn’t see too much of each other, allowed absence to make the heart grow fonder.

Clemmie was Winston’s loyal supporter, never losing faith in his genius or sincerity. But she was a shrewd observer of politics and acutely aware of the reasons why he sometimes aroused hostility and mistrust. Within a few weeks of his appointment as Prime Minister in 1940 she wrote to warn him “that there is a danger of your being generally disliked by your colleagues and subordinates because of your rough sarcastic and overbearing manner....you won’t get the best results by irascibility and rudeness.”

The idea that Churchill had no existence outside politics is a myth. Here we see him as a husband, father, friend, host, author, painter, bricklayer, film fan, and lover of good food and drink, a man of flesh and blood sharing the joys and tragedies of human life. Even in World War II he somehow found the time to read novels. His letters display a love and concern for his children, and an interest in their fortunes, that few top executives could match today.

The Churchills were both a happy and an unhappy family. Randolph was courageous and brilliant but rash and uncontrollable, a bull in the china shop of his father’s reputation. Sarah had a successful stage career but her emotional instability was a source of great anxiety, her first marriage to an entertainer whom Winston described as “common as dirt.” Diana suffered a failed marriage and a highly-strung disposition and eventually took her own life. Our author, growing up at idyllic Chartwell in a relatively calm time, was a striking exception.

Apart from his marriage, Chartwell was the great turning-point in Churchill’s private life. Although it had its uses as a political headquarters, it really awoke in him an ancestral love of the land. To Clemmie’s dismay, he poured a fortune into rebuilding the house and grounds, and costly experiments in farming. He wrote her more than a hundred “Chartwell Bulletins” full of enthusiastic reports on the creation of waterworks and rockeries and the fortunes of a menagerie of animals and pets. Here too he was a fond parent, building a tree-house for the children; and a benevolent country squire, intervening to assist “Mr. and Mrs. Donkey Jack,” gypsies who lived in a shack on common land. But for World War II, Churchill would have abandoned politics, pulled up the drawbridge, and settled down to the delights of Chartwell. Or would he?

Thriving in the Shade

JOHN G. PLUMPTON


Randolph Churchill is said to have regretted the difficulty of acorns surviving in the shade of a great oak. Yet in some cases acorns thrive, and fall not far from the parent. One >>

Mr. Plumpton is a former president of The Churchill Centre, a senior editor of Finest Hour, and a contributor for thirty years. This review is reprinted from FH 153, Winter 2011-12.
example was Mary Churchill, later Lady Soames, whose personal story was wonderfully told in her long-awaited autobiography. Here she recounts the rapid-fire events of her first twenty-five years, culminating in her marriage to Christopher Soames in 1947. She was born at the same time as her father purchased Chartwell, a house she has treasured all of her life. Her book brings Chartwell alive as a home better than any guidebook.

She opens with a poignant account of the sad death of Marigold Churchill, the beloved “Duckadilly.” A year later Mary arrived: “Perhaps I was, for my parents, the child of consolation.” We meet Maryott White (“Cousin Moppet” or “Nana”), her mother’s cousin and Mary’s godmother, nanny and lifelong friend. With her parents often in London and abroad, “Nana in all matters ruled my existence—always loving and always there.”

Nana introduced the precocious child to the joys of literature: a passion that has remained throughout her life. Lady Soames recalls being enthralled by Black Beauty, Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, Treasure Island, Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Beatrix Potter. She was spellbound by her father’s recitals of Macaulay’s Lays of Ancient Rome. A treasured possession was a gift from her sister Sarah, “a lovely green leather-bound copy of The Oxford Book of English Verse, much faded now.” Her love of literature expanded to the theatre, and there is a litany of the great plays of the 1930s and 1940s that she enjoyed.

Mary grew up in an adult world and her memoirs are full of insight: “I loved my parents unquestionably and my mother I held in considerable awe. I thought her very beautiful, sought to please her, and greatly feared her displeasure….My relationship with my father was altogether much easier—it just seemed to happen. Of course, he did not have to deal with the small print of my life or wrestle with my short-comings in the same way as my mother.”

Her siblings were all very different: “Randolph was too distant from me in age to be part of my scheme of things….Diana was benevolent towards me but was chiefly London-based, coming down to Chartwell on weekends. Sarah was my childhood heroine and my greatest friend.”

Giving away the bride, 1947.

Winston’s circle included Professor Lindemann, Eddie Marsh, Alfred Duff Cooper, Bernard Baruch, Lawrence of Arabia (“I liked him very much and noticed his piercing blue eyes and intense manner”) and Lloyd George (“I was strongly and immediately struck by the great man’s white locks, his animation and his celebrated Celtic charm”).

World War II, her formative influence, takes up half of the book. She began the war living at Chequers, an 18-year-old with the Women’s Voluntary Service, which she joined in 1940. The next year she joined the Army’s Auxiliary Territorial Service as a “gunner girl.” She traces her career from training centres to command of an anti-aircraft battery, and as aide-de-camp to her father on trips to the summits at Quebec and Potsdam.

Young Mary lived a very eclectic wartime life, enduring the privations of ordinary soldiers, while staying betimes with her parents at Chequers and No. 10 Annexe, the above-ground rooms where her father spent most of his time in London. She had an active social life. Like most of her peers, she enjoyed being “footloose and fancy-free and very much on the look-out for romance.” She declined two marriage proposals—actually three because the eventual winner, Christopher Soames, had to propose twice.

Her portraits of VIPs are fascinating: Harry Hopkins (“at first a somewhat dour impression from which soon emerged great personal charm”); Jan Smuts (“calm demeanour and wise judgment”); Charles de Gaulle (“a stern, direct giant. We all thought him very fine”); Mackenzie King (“very nice but a bit of a maiden aunt”); Franklin Roosevelt (“most kind, charming and entertaining”); Louis Mountbatten (“good-looking and most affable. Sarah and I fell for him in a big way.”); In 1945 she wrote her mother of Sir Harold Alexander: “The person I’ve really lost my heart to is Alex—who is definitely my fav’rite Field Marshal. He is one of the few people I fell for at the age of 17 who has stood the stern test of time.”

Even at a young age, Lady Soames had an eye for detail and character analysis. There are moving descriptions of the loss of family and friends during the war, and accounts of “tensions and difficulties on the family front,” even as great events unfolded. We are reminded throughout the book that the Churchills were a very human family in ways that historians are unable to capture.

Although there is a bibliography, the major source is the diary the author has kept for most of her life. Assuredly it is one of the great documents of history, which some day may be a major resource for historians. In the meantime, A Daughter’s Tale is a most illuminating portrait of the early life of a remarkable woman who truly was a worthy offspring of Winston and Clementine Churchill.
Chronologically as received...

A thing to grieve over. She knew how to be the daughter of a great man. It involved being a good person.

Larry Arnn, President, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Mich.

She was the living embodiment of her Father’s ideals and spirit, our guiding light and inspiration over many years of committed service. She joined the Council in 1978 and was Chairman of Trustees in 1991-2002—a wonderful twenty-four years of personal dedication. Even after retirement as our “Fellow Emeritus” she remained interested in the Trust’s work and what Churchill Fellows were achieving, always attending our House of Commons dinners and award ceremonies. As our Guest of Honour she presented Churchill Medallions and gave a wonderful address at the award ceremony at the Guildhall in 2008. Her presence and inspiration will be much missed.

Jamie Balfour, Director General, Churchill Memorial Trust

She will be remembered as one who gave so much to others. We join in sending our sincere condolences.

Barbara Higgins, Churchill Club of Conwy, Wales

In all the tributes, it’s very important to recall that she was also a first-class biographer and historian. Her biography of her mother won the Wolfson Prize, Britain’s top award for history, and her edition of her parents’ correspondence was meticulous in its scholarship. She wrote six interesting, intelligent, well-crafted books. Her turn of phrase was never less than elegant, her insights invariably acute. For as long as people are interested in Churchill’s personality and actions—that is, for the rest of Time—we will be in debt to her skill as a writer.

Andrew Roberts, New York City

The loss of this great lady with the many insights she offered to her father is shared here.

Daniel Artagavetta, Montevideo, Uruguay

She stands out as the longest-lived Churchill in history. I thought it rather poignant that just after the announcement of her passing I was reading in Finest Hour about the founding of the Churchill Centre in Boston twenty years ago (FH 162: 52), and there was the picture of Mary next to Harriet and me. She stayed at our home for the few days before that conference.

Cyril Mazansky, Newton Centre, Mass.

Once with David and Diane Boler we took Mary to dinner, where she told of her wartime experiences. We were so enthralled that we asked if she would show us where her battery was situated. Off we went to Hyde Park Corner. About 100 yards in, she outlined the placement of guns, ammunition and stores. Then she told us of how “Papa” would invite VIPs like Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, to “go and watch Mary’s battery pop-off a few.” On one visit her father decided to rest, and sat down on a box of ammunition to puff a cigar. Overhead was a large sign: “Danger. No Smoking,” but no one was prepared to point that out to the Prime Minister!

Around the VE-Day anniversary in 1995 I went to her townhouse late on a warm afternoon. She greeted me at the door and after showing me around offered me a drink. She opened her fridge and all I saw was yogurt and champagne. She said: “We must have The Cuveé.” I said, “of course,” and over the course of a lengthy visit, we drank the entire bottle. As I left I stood outside in the heat, my head swimming from all that champagne, thinking, “I just shared an entire bottle of Pol Roger Churchill Cuveé with his daughter—why didn’t I have her sign the bottle?” But I couldn’t get my head and feet to coordinate going back to her door, so I piled into the taxi she had ordered for me, went back to my hotel and passed out. She went out for dinner.

John Plumpton, TCC President 2000-03, Toronto, Ont.

In Marrakesh during the Morocco tour I entered a room just after Mary had learned that my wife Margaret was home expecting our first child, Anna. She greeted me with the enthusiasm she might have expressed had her father won the 1945 election. She told me of the joy when her first child was born, and about child-rearing in general. In one of her talks she mentioned her sister Diana praying: “Oh God, please bless the Dardanelles, whatever they are.” This reminded my wife of Anna, aged one, already impatient with us and the world, standing beside her crib in the morning, announcing: “Mafeking has been relieved!” This was Anna’s way of speeding her parents to get the day moving—not a reference to Churchill but to Shirley Temple playing “The Little Princess,” whose father was in the Boer War.

Fred Sheehan, Braintree, Mass.
I was never fortunate enough to meet her, but the entire team was so very fond of her as a longstanding supporter of our work here. The loss of her friendship and guidance will be keenly felt by all. Our thoughts go out to her family at this difficult time. To honour her passing, our flag flew at half-mast over Chartwell.

KATHERINE BARNETT, HOUSE & COLLECTIONS MGR., CHARTWELL, KENT ★★★

We met at the 1990 San Francisco conference. Saddam Hussein had just invaded Kuwait, but despite the crisis I obtained leave from my submarine to attend. At the traditional black-tie banquet I was introduced to her by Robert Hardy as “a young gentleman in the Navy.” I was young in those days, and it is a pleasant memory.

Is there anyone left who can claim to have met FDR, Truman, Stalin, de Gaulle, Lawrence of Arabia, Stanley Baldwin and Charlie Chaplin? She knew them all, and more. Fortunately she shared her memories with us, in person and in print, and we became the richer for it.

DAVID FREEMAN, EDITOR, CHARTWELL BULLETIN, PLACENTIA, CALIF. ★★★

I recall a smart young Army lieutenant, aide-de-camp to her father the Prime Minister. at Potsdam in 1945. I was part of a group of Royal Marines responsible for the security and protection of the British Cabinet (“Eye-Witness to Potsdam,” FH 145: 30-36.) Now that Mary has rejoined her family, I would like to pay my greatest respects to that young, smart, efficient Lieutenant I remember from 1945, and to those who loved her.

NEVILLE BULLOCK RM (RET.), ASHTON, LANCASHIRE ★★★

She frequently visited the Angus Glens. At a concert in Cortachy Castle the act—the Whiffenpoof singers from Yale University—was running late, and Lady Airlie suggested that her houseguest could “do a turn” to keep the audience entertained. Lady Soames agreed to tell them a bit about “Mama and Papa.” Their marriage was not as stormy as some believe, she said, likening it to Shakespeare’s sonnet 116. “Let me not to the marriage of true minds, admit impediments,” she began. “Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds,” she continued, completing the poem in time for the Whiffenpoofs’ arrival.

The Scotsman, Edinburgh ★★★

One of my fondest memories is sitting with her in our New Hampshire colonial home, going through Georgina Landemare’s cookbook, Recipes From Number Ten. I treasure my copy, festooned with blue Sticky Notes on favorite recipes. I was writing a column interpreting the recipes and measurements for modern kitchens (FH 95-115). We sat hip to hip, slowly turning the pages, as Mary noted particularly memorable dishes. Three Sticky Notes are marked in her own hand: cold mousse, Boodles orange fool, gateau hollandaise. I offered these and her other favorites in my column: coq au vin, pommes de terre anna, beignets, biscuits fromage, eclairs. Later she sent me Mrs. Landemare’s handwritten recipe for Christmas pudding, which the cook had given to Grace Hamblin. Attached was a note from Grace, who said Mrs. Landemare “was always trying to make a cook out of me.” “You have devoted so much thought and cooking, so many hours, to revive Mrs. Landemare’s recipes,” Mary wrote. “Here is a little present for you, which I believe you will cherish.” Yes, I most certainly do.

BARBARA LANGWORTH, MOULTONBOROUGH, N.H. ★★★

Chartwell was her home growing up and her autobiography recounts lovely stories of playing and relaxing with her family here. I feel very privileged to have known her. She was instrumental in every aspect of Chartwell’s development to enable visitors to enjoy her family home. She and Lady Churchill developed the visitor route and decided which parts of the collection should be on show; they added staircases and extra doors to create a smooth visitor flow. I have fond memories of her passion for this place. She came to meet me in my first month. We went round the house and studio and it was great to hear her stories about the rooms and collections. When we got to the studio she was not as pleased, for we had the whisky and soda mix too strong. “My father never had his whisky that strong!” she exclaimed to us. I always check how it looks when I go in the studio. We shall all miss her guidance and wisdom.

ZOE COLBECK, GENERAL MANAGER, CHARTWELL, KENT ★★★

We had fortuitous conversation when I was preparing a presentation on her father and his art for the American Art Therapy Association. From my studies of his use of art as therapy, I had formed the opinion that Churchill was not Manic Depressive as is so commonly stated. Rather, his need for hyperactivity affected him strongly when circumstances slowed him down, and he turned to painting to absorb his vibrant energy. I asked Lady Soames if she felt that her father experienced depression, his “black dog.” She responded, “I think the psychiatrists have made rather a big meal of that!” The only times she had seen her father depressed, she added, were times when not to be sad would have been inhuman: “Some of the things he went through would depress anybody.”

CAROL BRECKENRIDGE, CLEVELAND, OHIO >>
I met her twice: once when Mary Helen, my late wife, and I were visiting the Churchill Archives Centre and Allen Packwood kindly invited us to lunch with him and Lady Soames; and at the 2007 Vancouver conference when we were at her table for dinner.

My talk at Vancouver about Churchill and the Burma campaign necessarily involved some criticism, nuanced I hope, of her father. Lady Soames was extremely gracious afterwards and really did accept that historians would necessarily see things a bit differently than her father had—very impressive from a devoted daughter. We were both struck by her charm, her considerable knowledge worn lightly, and her sense of humor. With her passing a link with a great past is severed.

Prof. Raymond Callahan, Univ. of Delaware, Newark, Del.

She was a great patron and regular visitor to both Churchill College and the Churchill Archives Centre at Cambridge, where she spent much time. I remember her coming to undertake research for her excellent book of her parents’ letters, Speaking for Themselves. While sitting in our reading room she spotted me leading a group of primary school children around the Archives Centre. I explained that they were here as part of a classroom study they were doing of her father, and she instantly offered to meet with them.

When it came to questions there was initial shyness, but finally one young boy piped up: “Are you famous just because your father was famous?” His teacher’s face flushed red. For a few seconds there was an awkward silence. Then Mary defused it all: “But dear, I am not famous at all. I am lucky to be the daughter of a famous father.” It was a brilliant answer, but only half correct, for she was justly famous in her own right—for her role in the war as an officer with anti-aircraft batteries, for her prize-winning biography of her mother and other literary works, for her role at the National Theatre, for her leadership and patronage of the global network of Churchill organisations. The Churchill Archives Centre is proud to hold her papers alongside those of her father, mother, brother and husband.

Prof. Raymond Callahan, Univ. of Delaware, Newark, Del.

Mary was a wonderful supporter of all UK activities of the Churchill Society and Centre. I fondly recall her attendance at our conferences in Bath, Portsmouth and London, where she was inevitably the star of the show. Being with her in Bermuda and Quebec, and at the exhibition at the Library of Congress in Washington, when we were addressed by President George W. Bush, was also a great treat, as she mingled with so many international admirers. My wife and I were privileged to have been invited by Mary to attend the annual service of the Order of the Garter in St George’s Chapel, Windsor, in 2010. As she processed in and out of the chapel with the Queen and the other Knights and Ladies, clad in her dark blue Garter mantle and plumed Tudor bonnet, we had a rare glimpse of her as part of the panoply of State. When she was appointed a Lady Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter in 2005, I sent her congratulations. “I am, of course, thrilled and feel deeply honoured,” she replied. “There seems to be a great number of things to organise (or be organised for) in advance of the installation, and I am off this very afternoon to be informed on all these matters by no less than Garter King of Arms and the Secretary of the Order of the Garter.” At this point the typescript abruptly terminated…followed by a final paragraph in her own hand: “Later. Back home—my head whirling with the detail. I shall walk the dog!”

Paul Courtenay, FH Senior Editor, Andover, Hants.

She was our Patron from 1984—and how fortunate that was. Many patrons exist only as organizational ornaments, aroused and displayed and then quickly shelved. Not ours! From the outset, she immersed herself in our work: attending board meetings (on ship and ashore), playing central roles at our conferences, contributing to Finest Hour, writing and speaking on our behalf and, importantly, offering wise and timely advice. The Churchill Centre’s debt to her can never be repaid, but it can be acknowledged through the coming years coupled with appropriate reminders of how essential she was to everything we did, and hoped to do.

Bill Ives, TCC President, 2003-07, Chapel Hill, N.C.
When we met at Williamsburg Conference in 1998, our conversation was light and friendly. She always greeted us warmly later. As her “hosts” at the 2003 Bermuda conference it was fun to wander the buffet with Mary saying, “a bit of that and, oh yes, some of this,” as her plate filled. Our conversation was often about family and travel. We cherish the formal photograph of us with her at the special reception. Mary was awash in a light blue satin gown with a crowning tiara. She was a lady in every sense. We will continue to miss her presence.

PHIL AND SUE LARSON, CHICAGO, ILL. ★★★

It was 2007, on the occasion of Martin Gilbert’s publication of his book on the Battle of the Somme (FH 134). Bursting with excitement, I was eager to tell her of The American Spectator’s respect for her father. She accepted my admiration with grace but turned to the lady next to me, whom I had neglected to introduce—my wife Jeanne, as luck would have it. She more than compensated for my neglect and we went home that night agreeing we had met a wonderful woman.

R. EMMETT TWRLL, ED., THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR, WASHINGTON ★★★

Each time I saw her speak she held the audience in the palm of her hand while radiating intelligence, charm, diplomatic sensitivity, and an underlying strength of character of which one is always aware even though it’s largely unspoken. How fortunate Sir Winston was to have a daughter who was such an intelligent, persuasive and indefatigable champion of his reputation.

PROF. PAUL ADDISON, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH ★★★

One afternoon years ago she invited my two young daughters and me to her cozy London home. Before lunch we shared a bottle of Pol Roger while “Prune,” her Lancashire Heeler, sadly blind, entertained us by running round the garden, maneuvering around plants and shrubs as if she had built-in radar.

After showing us around, pointing out important paintings and memorabilia, she called for a taxi to a restaurant, for more champagne and a fine lunch including “pudding,” the English word for dessert: “One can’t have lunch without a pudding.” Carefully and “age-appropriately” she told of how frightened she was during “that ghastly war” and how many times she did not think that she would survive. Her father, she said, felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. “You see,” she reminded the girls, “we didn’t know we were going to win, so it was touch-and-go for a long time, and he felt very much alone.” We sat spellbound, having a personal history lesson from one of the “greatest generation.”

JACQUELINE, OLIVIA AND CHARLOTTE WITTER, REDWOOD CITY, CALIF.  

Mary was a generous friend dating back to the 1990 Conference in San Francisco, when you seated me next to her at the Board dinner. She wrote a splendid letter of introduction that aided research for my book, Winston Churchill: Soldier. She also wrote a lovely and gracious preface for the new edition of my Churchill Centre book, The Orders, Decorations and Medals of Sir Winston Churchill. After she received the Order of The Garter in 2005, she sent me the programs for the investiture, the procession and the installation service (which she called “a nice slice of medieval cake”) because she knew I would be interested—completely unbidden.

HON. DOUGLAS RUSSELL, IOWA CITY, IA. ★★★

One late afternoon, after sitting through a number of presentations at a Churchill Conference and bemoaning the difficulty of staying awake, Mary told us this story. When her husband Christopher was British Ambassador to France (1968-72), they attended many dinners with long, often boring after-dinner speeches. Mary often fell asleep, but Christopher was nice about it. One evening, she fell asleep on Lord Rothschild’s shoulder! Afterwards she asked Lady Rothschild how did she always stay awake? She answered, “NoDoz.” From that time on, Mary told us, “I still take NoDoz.”

JUDITH KAMBESTAD, LOS OSOS, CALIF. ★★★

At the 1990 San Francisco conference, when asked to name figures who had an influenced her father in terms of leadership, strategy and political thought, Lady Soames named five including Robert E. Lee and Abraham Lincoln. On the spot, an idea was born for a 1991 “Churchill’s Virginia” conference on Churchill and the American Civil War, which we duly held at Richmond and Williamsburg. Sir Martin Gilbert and Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr. were the keynote speakers.

In San Francisco, the Board arrived a day early for dinner with Lady Soames. Afterward the party boarded a private trolley for a ride through the city. She and I sat together, arms interlocked. Thanks to Christian Pol-Roger the trolley was well-stocked with bubbly—so I had a champagne cable car ride with my traveling companion, Lady Soames. What an indelible memory!

RICHARD KNIGHT, NASHVILLE, TENN. >>

FINEST HOUR 164 / 29
It was during my fifteen-month wedding trip, the first time I lived in London, that I met Mary Soames, introduced by a mutual friend. I was at work on a book on Churchill. As we talked in her flat in spring 1989, I was struck, like others who write about her father, with her sympathetic and respectful view of my interest in his writings. Over the years I came to realize that it was the natural result of growing up in the house of a serious writer, and being one herself.

An ally and friend from the start, she answered my questions, urging me to plunge into every controversy and to make up my own mind. Disclaiming special expertise, she insisted I talk to those who knew about his books and arranged for me to visit Sir William Deakin in France.

When Judith and I resolved to found the Rt Hon Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Society of Alaska in 1990, Mary agreed to be its patron. In 1994, she made her first visit to Alaska. At Denali National Park, she saw the Churchill Peaks, the north and south summits of Mt. McKinley; then, tying a kerchief around her neck, she gamely ate ribs and corn on the cob. As our guest of honor at a Churchill Society dinner, she jumped up to join the Canaries in singing Harrow School songs.

For the next two decades we enjoyed her company, including a memorable trip to the Crimea. I was struck by her ability to find the right words on every occasion. In Simferopol Airport, after putting up with fulsome greetings from our bloviating Russian hosts for two hours, she gently ended the session, recalling from her father’s memoirs that it was quite a drive to Yalta. They assured her the trip was faster now, and it was: our bus barreled straight down the middle of the road with a police escort, making other drivers dive onto the shoulder.

Most delightful were our talks at her house in London over a small bottle of Pol Roger, or in her favorite restaurant around the corner. She counted it her duty to set the record straight in the alleys of political and historical controversy when someone mistook the facts or was unfair to her father. She inherited his noble love of truth and never shrank from hard thinking or blunt talk. It was fine to see her loyalty to her father’s memory. But I also enjoyed her wit, her delight in life, her encouragement, her sense of

**Hon. Jonah Triebwasser, Red Hook, N.Y.**

My wife Dorothy and I first met Lady Soames in 1984. We saw her last when she hosted us at her home in London in September 2012. Lady Soames was especially close to our Churchill Society of British Columbia and its members. Her husband, Lord Soames, gave the first address to the Society after its formation in 1979, and Lady Soames addressed our members at our annual banquets in 1984, 1989 and 2003. At the International Churchill Conference, organized and hosted by the Churchill Society of British Columbia in Vancouver in 2007, the attendees were privileged to celebrate Lady Soames’s birthday with our Patron as the guest of honour. Mary established close relationships with a number of our members, including our past president Joe Siegenberg and our former director Joan McConkey. She often seemed to rely on me to help her at the many conferences and events we attended.

**Christopher Hebb, W. Vancouver, B.C.**

Ellen and I had the privilege of meeting her at a book signing in 1992 at the FDR Library in Hyde Park, New York, where she opened an exhibit of her father’s paintings. (See “A Friend Who Was Here,” page 36.) We were waiting to have our book signed, it occurred to me that we were going to London soon and had never been to Chartwell. I came up with the bright idea of asking Her Ladyship how to get to Chartwell by public transport. Ellen was mortified and said, “You can’t ask her that!” I replied, “Why not? She lived there, she ought to know!”

Well, I did, and Lady Soames could not have been more gracious. She not only told us what train to take, but how much the cab fare should be from the station, and recommended a restaurant or two in the area. The book she signed that day, *Winston Churchill: His Life as a Painter*, is a cherished part of my library.

**With Christopher Hebb, 2007**

**The Canaries, Anchorage, 1994. James Muller at left.**

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**With Christopher Hebb, 2007**

**The Canaries, Anchorage, 1994. James Muller at left.**
fun, her sparkling eyes. We often talked about the rewards and vicissitudes of writing. I marveled at her schedule when she was rising at six in the morning to work through the quiet hours on her edition of her parents’ letters to each other. She taught me to differentiate, when inscribing my books, between a book I gave someone and a book someone asked me to sign, lest the latter inscription suggest the book was my gift—a nice distinction.

By 1995, when I came to England for research and we lived at Churchill College in Cambridge, our daughter Helen had arrived; Mary always remembered her birthday and asked her to call her an honorary aunt.

In 2000 Mary returned to Alaska for the 17th Churchill Conference and celebrated her birthday with us. The night before it opened, as we sat on the carpet assembling packets for 200 delegates, we were surprised when she joined us to finish the job. When we lived in London again in autumn 2004, Helen enrolled at Queen’s College, an independent girls’ school where Mary had studied for a year. I dare say her recommendation had something to do with Helen’s being admitted for only a few months.

No one who met Mary will ever forget her charm, her acuity, her judgment, or the twinkle in her eyes. Those who missed meeting her, and everyone who misses her now, will find all those qualities in her books.

At the Quebec Conference I said to her, “Because of my admiration for your father, my son named his son Winston.” She said “good” and gave me the thumbs-up sign. I have a photo of my grandson at Bladon.

In Bermuda after the 2003 conference, my wife Diane and I were sitting in the hotel lounge when Mary joined us for afternoon tea. As the afternoon wore on, more and more people joined us. Eventually the conversation moved on to the war, and more specifically, the Allied invasion of France. I asked her, “What were you doing on D-Day?” fully expecting her to say she was providing succour and support to her father as he anxiously waited news of the invasion, or perhaps in Southwick House on the south coast, where the invasion headquarters were. “My dear,” she replied, “I was attending a lecture with several hundred other ATS girls on how to make omelettes from powdered eggs.”

That same afternoon she told me of the time she and her husband Christopher, then Ambassador to France, attended a state banquet hosted by President de Gaulle. Mary was seated next to the President, and, after a long and munificent dinner, the great man rested his head on Mary’s shoulder, and fell asleep! “Oh, Mary,” I said with a laugh, “I do hope you are going to put these sort of anecdotes in your autobiography (which she was then writing). “Oh no, my dear,” she replied, “you mustn’t forget that these men have children.” That was Mary, polite and thoughtful of others to the last.

For the past two years I have been the President of the Board of Advisers for Osher Life Long Learning Institute at Duke University. In September I start my eighth one-semester course on Churchill. When I come to his children I hope I can manage not to tear up. One had only to meet Mary to love her.

In 2004 we heard that Lady Soames’s Canadian Tilley hat, of which she was most fond, had been devoured by some animal in South Africa. Arriving for the Portsmouth conference that year, we brought a new one, signed by the inventor, Alex Tilley himself, carrying it in a fragile hatbox. She welcomed us at West House with tea, cookies and Pol Roger—and literally popped from her chair with delight and immediately tried it on: hence this wonderful picture!

Briefly alone, I raced to video Mary’s collection of her father’s paintings, which she invited me to do. What an opportunity! Alas it was not to be, for Solveig had worn the batteries down filming Mary, her Tilley hat, and her garden. Later she called a cab to take us to our next stop. The driver refused all coin of the realm, even a tip. He said Lady Soames had already paid, sternly directing him to take no tip. He even called me “Guv’nor.”

As we look back over the thirty years we were blessed with her company, Solveig and I remember fondly the “Tilley Afternoon” at West House. Our memories lessen the sadness of her loss.

G.R. (Randy) Barber, Chairman, ICS Canada, Markham, Ont.
I am excited and honoured to be here at the first gathering of the North Texas Chapter, and if I’ve had anything to do with people wanting to come then I am indeed happy. You will realise how deeply moving it is for me to see how revered, so long after his death, is my father’s memory, which the International Churchill Society does so much to keep fresh and green.

It makes me proud that you have all come here today to meet me. And as you are setting out on your way, may I venture to say to you what I hope the International Churchill Society does? It does a lot of things, of course—but I hope especially it will continue to take a particular care and pride in keeping the record straight.

There are a lot of stories told about famous people, and I find that as time goes on it is rather like the lens of a camera: Virtues and faults come...
out of focus. Inaccurate statements said in some paper or book are copied lightheartedly, and reproduce themselves all over the place. Few people take the trouble to go back to the source and find out if that really was what happened. I like to hope that the Society will, above all the other things, regard itself as the guardian of the true picture and try always to bring that camera back into true focus.

Sorry to give you a little lecture but I do care about it tremendously. Your president Richard Langworth would forgive me for saying the only time I’ve ever fallen out with him a little bit was when I saw a really horrible effigy of my father being advertised in Finest Hour, and I wrote him a furious letter! [Laughter] Any other society, of course, could trade anything they liked—it’s a free world—but the Churchill Society should be careful what they reproduce, because you are, you can be, the repository of the true story and the true image. Naturally, as his daughter, I care very much about that.

Your chairman has suggested that you would like me to recall my father as a family man, and I shall do so with great joy as well as some nostalgia. It always gives me happiness when I have an opportunity to revive both for myself and for others the vivid personality, the warmth and humanity of my great and beloved father, in the glow of whose memory I shall ever live. Of course his family and close friends were the principal beneficiaries of his warm-heartedness and in the main genial temperament. But those who knew Winston Churchill best in public and in private have often testified to the oneness of his character.

His public face was not that much different from the private countenance we all knew. He was a most natural, almost uninhibited person with an engaging frankness of expression and candour of mind which were refreshing to encounter. His spontaneous enjoyment of so many things in life and his many interests and talents made him a very enthralling companion, as those who worked closely with him have often recounted. And I’m so glad that some of you had the opportunity today to meet for a brief moment Sir John Colville and his wife. Sir John has just published his diaries, Fringes of Power. He was my father’s private secretary from the beginning of the war on and off right through the war, and then again when my father was Prime Minister for the second time.

He started, having been in Mr. Neville Chamberlain’s private office, with a real anti-Churchill outlook, and it is to me moving and touching to see, as the days and months go by, how he became a candid and deep admirer, a loyal servant, and a true friend. Long after my father left office, he and Margaret Colville were frequent visitors to wherever my parents were, and in the last days of my father’s life, they were among the people who came to bid him farewell.

You will see in his book—which I do most strongly recommend—the engaging and private side of my father’s life: how he liked to talk to his private secretary on duty (which was often Jock Colville), and his naturalness. Do try and get it. He’s not very nice about me in the beginning, but we have remained friends all the way. [Laughter.]

To have been my father’s child was an enrichment, as perhaps you can imagine, beyond compare. And from my earliest years I found myself admitted to a grown-up world of interest, variety, excitement and fun. My childhood memories of my parents are chiefly centred around life at Chartwell, which I believe quite a number of you have visited. Chartwell was where my father loved most to be in the whole world. He used to say, “A day spent away from Chartwell is a day wasted.” And there I, by far the youngest of his children, was brought up from my earliest days.

Of course, no account of Winston Churchill as a family man can exclude his beloved Clementine, whose abiding beauty, distinct personality, steadfast love, and—last but not least—good housekeeping, made the constant background to her husband’s tumultuous career. Many years after they were married he was to write her: “My greatest good fortune in a life of brilliant experience has been to find you and to lead my life with you.” What a tribute! And for fifty-seven years they lived together, through a period as tumultuous and changing as surely as any in our history. Together, they faced the ups and downs of political life. And for nearly all their lives, they were in the eye of the storms which have rocked our civilisation.

We children were early on to learn the tides and seasons of Parliamentary sessions—the overriding responsibilities of public life which governed our parents’ lives, which took no account of school prize-givings, family feasts or carefully planned treats and holidays. Even when we were quite small, we learned to sense and to respond to the >>
tension of the crisis. My father used to say gravely, “We must all rise to the level of events”—an austere dictum for the young, but I have come to be grateful for it in my life. Public dramas penetrated to the nursery floor. In 1915, at the height of the Dardanelles Crisis which resulted in grievous loss of life and dramatic repercussions, my sister Diana, then aged six, was heard by her nanny to pray with fervour, “Oh God, please bless the Dardanelles, whatever they are.”

For me, clear consecutive memories of my father begin with the opening of that decade which has come to be called “The Wilderness Years”: 1929-39. In 1929, he ceased to be Chancellor of the Exchequer after Stanley Baldwin’s Conservative government was defeated. For ten years after that he was to be out of office. Winston was now in his mid-fifties, Clementine ten years younger, myself eightish, trailing along well behind the big ones, Diana, Randolph, and Sarah. Winston was of course still a member of Parliament, and politics kept my parents much in London. But in the Thirties, Chartwell, which had been bought in the early Twenties, became more and more the centre of their lives.

Looking back with a perspective which one doesn’t have at the time, I think what strikes me most about my father at that period, is what a prodigious worker he was. Our domestic life was geared around his programme. Chartwell was a veritable factory. The lights from his upstairs study gleamed late into the night while, padding up and down that long room with its raftered ceiling, he dictated to his secretary hour after hour. His speeches, whether on platforms up and down the country or from his place below the gangway in the House of Commons, received infinite pains in their preparation. Newspaper articles for both home and abroad poured forth. His political activities alone would have filled a busy life, but apart from all this, he made time for his work as an author and as a historian.

It must never be forgotten that he was not a rich man. He kept us all by his pen. His literary output in those years was truly amazing. Apart from collections and speeches, articles and essays, his major works between the two world wars were The World Crisis, the story of the 1914-18 war and its aftermath; and his monumental Life of his great ancestor, John Churchill First Duke of Marlborough—nine volumes between them. The outbreak of the Second World War found him hard at work on his four-volume History of the English Speaking Peoples, a vivid, panoramic tapestry, from which he broke off to contribute with his own life and actions more memorable pages to that history. After the Second World War he was to complete this work, but only after the six volumes of his war memoirs.

Someone has compared him to Caesar, who waged wars and wrote about them. All the while he was involved in politics, leading his party from the humiliating defeat of 1945 back to power once more. Winston Churchill was seventy-seven and still going strong when he became Prime Minister again in 1951. And if we now recall him chiefly as a statesman and world leader, we must remember that it was for literature that he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1953.

Life was not all toil. Far from it! If midnight oil was consumed by the gallon, daylight and sunshine hours were filled with a multitude of occupations: building walls and cottages, making dams, turning peninsulas into islands, constructing swimming pools, and devising complicated water-
works so the little rivulet that ran in at the Chart Well splashed round down through the valley and was pumped up again to start crashing down the hill again.

During the winter of 1934, when my mother was away on a long sea voyage, a friend staying at Chartwell wrote to keep her in touch. She wrote, “Winston has so many irons in the fire that the day is not nearly long enough, what with the new wall and the mechanical digger that does the work of forty men, rebuilding the chauffeur’s cottage, films, the crisis in India, and when there is nothing else, Marlborough. Well, you see, we are busy.”

Then of course there was his painting. You will perhaps have the chance to go up to your wonderful Dallas Museum of Art and to see there, among very great works of art, a small exhibition of my father’s pictures. Some of them I’m very proud of, and think are quite good. He took up painting literally as occupational therapy when he was over forty, in the traumatic aftermath of the Dardanelles catastrophe; and from that grim summer of 1915 for over 40 years more, my father found hours of pleasure and occupation in painting. He himself wrote: “Happy are the painters, for they shall not be lonely. Light and colour, peace and hope, will keep them company to the end or almost to the end of the day.”

Those were prophetic words, for he continued to enjoy painting up to within a few years before his death. I am fortunate to live surrounded by some of his best pictures. They are so full of light and colour, and evoke for me many happy hours spent watching him paint or having picnics while he was painting. They evoke not only the many seasons of Chartwell and the brilliant light of the south of France, but they reflect also the hours of concentrated pleasure and oblivion from dark worries, which he derived from painting them.

One of my father’s salient characteristics was his readiness to forgive. Somebody said about him, “Winston is a very bad hater.” When I was a child, I often heard him quote the Biblical injunction, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” and it was a precept he practised both in his public and his private life. He indeed was a quick forgiver, and often it was he who made the first steps across the bridge, to make up quarrels, whether in matters great or small, whether with mighty grown-ups or his own silly, tempestuous children.

And in his public life, he preached and practised reconciliations and magnanimity in victory to his country’s former foes.

No recollection of my father could ignore the wit and wisdom and joviality of his company. Early admitted to our parents’ table as we children were, some of my most vivid childhood and teenage memories are the mealtimes at Chartwell. Much of the splendour of conversation, of course, sailed over my head in the earlier years. I think I may have possibly been more preoccupied about whether there were going to be enough cupcakes for me to have a second helping. But I think sometimes I didn’t miss all of the firework displays and eloquent argument.

As time went on, I began to follow and to feel inspired by the great issues of those days. But most of all, I remember with delight when our company was joined by some of the muses—the muses of history, of song, and poetry sacred and heroic. Led by my father, we would recite verse after verse from Macaulay’s *Lays of Ancient Rome*, his and our favourite being the glorious tale of how Horatio kept that bridge in the days of old; and the rollicking Edwardian musical songs he had enjoyed so much as a young man; and Rudyard Kipling in all his moods; and Rupert Brooke; and of course, Shakespeare.

What a prodigious memory my father had, reaching far back to his school days at Harrow. And from him, too, I learned as a child that throbbing, thrilling, glorious *Battle Hymn of the Republic*: “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord / He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored…” Perhaps those long ago, triumphant days were in our minds when we chose that hymn to be sung at his state funeral in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

With all these diversions, mealtimes sometimes prolonged themselves into three-hour sessions, often to my mother’s despair. Eventually she would make to move. And I so well remember my father looking at her down the table, lovingly and ruefully, and saying, “Oh, Clemmie, don’t go. It is so nice. Let us command the moment to remain.”

Of course, one never can. But today I’ve tried to command some precious moments that I remember to remain. And as I have recalled these things and that extraordinary man in your company, it has made me very happy.
For our last cover I chose a still life I knew she would love, anxious to send her a copy. Instead I find myself sitting down to record the loss of the person who, next to my wife, was the most significant in my life as a writer. We cherish memories of her boundless acts of generosity, which changed our lives forever.

We met in 1983 at the Churchill Hotel, London, on the first of eleven Churchill Tours, many of which she attended. She had a reputation as a determined guardian of the flame, and I wondered if she would view a “Churchill society” as gratuitous or frivolous. No: Lady Soames (“call me Mary”) was entirely approachable and grateful for our work. She was soon a familiar voice on the telephone, as interested in our doings as any doting aunt.

Two years later she and Lord Soames attended the second tour’s dinner for Anthony Montague Browne, her father’s last private secretary (FH 50), held at the Pinafore Room, Savoy Hotel, meeting place of The Other Club. Speaking first, Mary said it was a priceless opportunity to declare what the whole family owed to Anthony: “Until my father drew his last breath, Anthony was practically never absent from his side.” As for us:

Christopher is going to say a proper thank-you for having us—aren’t you, darling? But what a joy it is to be with you again. I do appreciate being asked to your lovely parties, and being kept up to date about the work of the Society. All of us in the family find this profoundly moving: that there is such a Society, which exists to keep my father’s memory green, and may I also say, accurate….

—25 September 1985

It hardly seems possible for anyone so engaged, but for thirty years she was always there for us, full of understanding, advice and wisdom, often playing editor, taking the time to “get it right”—and to deliver the occasional deserved rebuke. She was so…essential. It is quite impossible for me to imagine carrying on without her.

Her critiques diminished as I learned to avoid mischaracterizations of, or presumptuous notions about, her father. In a 1991 conference at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, an entertainer impersonating Thomas Jefferson made the mistake of suggesting that Sir Winston was too fond of alcohol. “My dear Mr. Jefferson,” Mary said firmly, “you have no way of knowing that, and since I as his daughter never saw him the worse for drink, I think you should avoid idle speculation.” Mr. Jefferson left early.

In 1992 she was our guest and met our family at Putney House. Our ten-year-old son, not used to English forms, delighted her by calling her “Mrs. Soames.” My aging father had become withdrawn and depressed; we feared he might have nothing to say. But like the aged Sir Winston, reviving with the stimulus of a kind friend, the years fell away and he astonished us with scintillating conversation. When she left, he lapsed back into silence.

We bundled her into the car and drove 225 miles to Hyde Park to open an exhibit of her father’s paintings. As we reached the Roosevelt Library she said, “Well driven—the President was a much scarier driver.” Then she added, almost an afterthought: “It is forty-nine years to the day, August 15th, 1943, that I was last here with Papa.” Opening the exhibit, she recalled that after the Casablanca Conference her father and the President
drove a long way across the desert to Marrakesh, where the President was hoisted into a tower.... There they sat, two great allies and friends, watching the sun setting over the Atlas Mountains. The next morning my father played truant from the war and painted his only wartime picture [“Tower of Katoubia Mosque,” *FH* 124 cover] giving it to the President in remembrance of that sunset. To come back to Hyde Park and to find an exhibition of his pictures really puts a crown on it. — 15 AUGUST 1992

Three years later she was with us at a Boston conference, chaired by Barbara Langworth. We had stellar speakers: William Buckley, William Manchester, Arthur Schlesinger—and Lady Soames. Afterward we drove her to New Hampshire in our vintage Cadillac for an extended holiday which took us to Dartmouth and the papers of Winston Churchill, the American novelist, where she read her father’s 1899 original: “Mr. Winston Churchill presents his compliments to Mr. Winston Churchill, and begs to draw his attention to a matter which concerns them both....”

I so enjoyed visiting Dartmouth, with that rich treasure trove and the charming pale figure of a librarian; swanning around in your lusciously velvety ruby red Cadillac and seeing lovely New England sights and scenes—those dear little red squirrels—and your parting gift of scrumptious hickory-cured real American bacon. Your home is also your “mill,” like Chartwell was for my father, which at once is a great advantage but also harder to take a break from. I always come away from you having learned something more about my beloved wonderful father....

— 5 NOVEMBER 1995

Which reminds me of...cigars. To celebrate Boston, Barbara had bought me a box of very special Partagas cigars. Mary and I smoked the box in five days, competing with each other, as she did with her father, to grow the longer ash. She always won!

There were amusing local encounters. At a country bistro known for “home cookin’” but no frills, Mary ordered a hamburger from Rosie, a stolid New England waitress who stood no nonsense. Mary was not ready for the long list of American options: Fries? Yes, please. Relish? Yes, thank you. Mustard?...sure. Ketchup, onions, pickles?...of course. Rosie stood back, hands on hips: “Do you want this on a plate, or do you want it on the floor?” Mary roared. I quipped, “Some day, Rosie, I’ll tell you who you said that to.” “Oh dear,” she said, “was I bad?” No, not really.

Mary was in Williamsburg, Virginia, for the 1998 conference, just after playing a quiet, decisive role in my receipt of a CBE. When I joked that the letters stood for “Colleagues’ Bloomin’ Efforts,” she sniffed: “It wasn’t that easy, you know!” She and Celia Sandys were without escorts, so we played unofficial hosts, and drove them to see the restoration at Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in America.

Thank you so much for not only the Jamestown expedition but also for “cherishing” both Celia and me in so many ways, which greatly added to our ease and enjoyment. But do you really want and need to retire as president of the Churchill Centre? I want to talk to you about this—please brood upon it. How pleased everyone is by the CBE. I am overjoyed. — 15 NOVEMBER 1998

There followed a lengthy exchange about my stepping down as president and leaving the Churchill book business—to both of which she was stoutly opposed. (I prevailed...eventually.) Six months later she was at our Maine bungalow, “Blenheim Cottage,” following the celebrated launch of USS *Winston S. Churchill* at Bath Iron Works. The Centre’s Board of Governors held a memorable dinner for her at our local inn, along with Secretary and Mrs. Weinberger and Winston and Luce Churchill.

Mary wanted to buy reading glasses for one of her daughters—so we took her to Walmart! Instant buzz >>
I have quite fallen in love with darling Blenheim Cottage, tucked away in that safe and calm corner of Tenant’s Harbour, with its beautiful peaceful view… it was so sweet of you to whisk me away at the end of that unforgettable day, 17th April, and carry me up there…. The Churchill Centre party at the East Wind Inn was so agreeable, and everybody was glowing from the day’s events, followed for me by three utterly blissful days “at Blenheim,” sitting around in the sunshine, monitoring ducks and cormorants and the come and go of boats… the Farnsworth Museum with such variety and scope of the Wyeth family’s amazing talent, then Barbara’s “mystery tour” to see the grey house which encapsulates the style and atmosphere of Andrew Wyeth’s work. — 4 May 1999

We’d give anything to have those three days back.

The years fled. We sold our houses and built anew in Moultonborough; she was invested a Lady of the Garter by HM The Queen (FH 129). By 2005 we well aware that at eighty-three, the Quebec Churchill Conference might be one of her last abroad. “Do come,” we said, “We’ll drive you down to N.H. amid the autumn colo(u)rs and get you to Boston for your flight home.”

She came. Everyone wanted to shake her hand; clusters of people trailed in her wake. As usual she took a rather more detached view than some of our conference scholars. We were seated together when one professor suggested that Second Quebec in 1944 had produced “nothing of significance.” She leaned over and gave me a very earthy synonym for “rubbish.”

At Close Reach she was one of our first houseguests, up mornings in her dressing gown, sipping coffee, sampling Barbara’s stellar breakfasts—helping us plan every day of the 2006 Churchill Tour of England. We were an easy drive from the Mount Washington Hotel, site of the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, where we booked dinner. I asked if the hotel might arrange a private tour for Sir Winston’s daughter. “How soon?” they asked.

“Now listen,” I said on the way, “the hotel believes your father stayed there in 1906. Of course it was the ‘other’ Winston Churchill, but don’t spoil their fun.”

“Certainly not,” she said primly. Immediately upon meeting the PR lady she said: “I understand you think my Papa was here in 1906. I’m sorry, dear, that is just not possible.” I groaned. She grinned.

The staff bought us a bottle of dinner wine and promised to change their official history to the American Churchill. Mary thought it “an amazing hotel,” and allowed that if he had got there, he’d have liked it fine.

She returned home anxious to see her dog “Prune” and her dear private secretary Nonie Chapman. Quickly came the usual long letter in her “own paw,” expressing thanks we didn’t deserve, because it was she whom we needed to thank, for giving us such delight for so long. As always, she wrote words she knew would please us.

I love the so-special and made-for-you home on the shores of that magical lake, and your boating/sailing life to come. Each day passed so pleasantly it all seemed so unurushed, and yet we seem to have accomplished a lot… the lovely lake cruise on the M/V Mount Washington. Dearest Barbara, you really are a star-at-the-stove (much relished by your greedy and always hungry friend)... Now back to work! Monday saw the return of my dog—and, more importantly, Nonie! — 13 October 2005

Our correspondence tapered off over the next few years. She had email now, but moreover, she was working flat-out on A Daughter’s Tale, no easy job for someone nearing ninety. Sadly, she was not the dynamo she had been. We knew and tried not to trouble her with our small affairs. In one conversation she sounded almost apologetic that she had not admonished me for some slip we let through that misrepresented her father. We sent her flowers each birthday, and long before the holiday her Christmas card was always first to arrive.

I can’t emphasize this more: it was Mary Soames who taught Finest Hour its editorial credo—never to proclaim what her father would do today; strive to “keep the memory green and the record accurate.” It was she who taught me that what really matters is friendship, that there is no point to die bearing a grudge. She was our guiding light—the person Barbara and I strove to please with every issue, every tour, every event.

The cover I hoped she would enjoy was not done in time. We were honored for so long to have known such a companion. Her love of congenial surroundings and company, of fine cigars and good food and Pol Roger, gave one a feeling of empathy almost tangible. We always wished the hour of parting would never come.

It came, as it must.

She was and is in the pantheon of great women, intellectual giants, artistic muses, but moreover with a perfect sense of what it is to be a friend. It was a stroke of fortune to have had our lives so enriched.
Goodbye, my dear,
Goodbye!
There still is much to say,
And yet
My tongue and pen,
so wont to fly,
Have of a sudden both run dry.

I’ll not forget
Too near to heaven
Did everything comply!
But destiny is set
As are the stars on high.
Goodbye, my dear, Goodbye!

—“Valediction,” Sarah Churchill, 1974
A married woman cannot normally display her paternal arms except in conjunction with those of her husband. This is a marital coat, showing the husband's arms on the dexter side (right side as seen by the bearer of the shield), and the wife's paternal arms on the sinister side; this is known as an impalement. The heraldic description is as follows:

Gules, a chevron Or between in chief two mallets erect of the second and in base two wings conjoined in lure Argent [SOAMES] impaling

Quarterly 1st and 4th Sable, a lion rampant Argent, on a canton of the last a cross Gules [CHURCHILL], 2nd and 3rd grand-quarterly Argent and Gules, in the 2nd and 3rd grand-quarters a fret Or; over all on a bend Sable three escallops of the first [SPENCER]; and, as an augmentation of honour, in chief an escutcheon Argent charged with the Cross of St George Gules and thereon an inescutcheon of the arms of France, namely Azure three fleurs-de-lys Or.

Around the shield is the Garter with its motto Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense [Shame on him who thinks evil of it], indicating the bearer’s honour as a Lady Companion of the Order of the Garter [LG]. Suspended below the shield from the ribbon of the Order of the British Empire is the badge of a Dame Commander of the Order [DBE]. Above the shield is the coronet of a Baroness.

Supporters: Dexter, a lion guardant winged Argent gorged with a collar gemel Gules; Sinister, a falcon wings elevated and addorsed and belled Or holding in the beak a lure Gules feathered Argent.

Motto: Fiel Pero Desdichado [Faithful but Unfortunate] is the Churchill family’s Spanish motto.

Progression of Honours
1922: Miss Mary Churchill.
1945: Miss Mary Churchill MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) for war service.
1947: Mrs. Christopher Soames MBE (upon marriage).
1965: The Hon. Mrs. Soames MBE (her mother, Lady Churchill, is given a Life barony as Lady Spencer-Churchill).
1972: The Hon Lady Soames MBE (her husband receives a knighthood, becoming Sir Christopher Soames).
1978: The Hon. Lady Soames MBE (“The Hon” is dropped when Sir Christopher becomes The Baron Soames).
1980: The Baroness Soames DBE (Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire on advancement from MBE).
2005: The Lady Soames LG DBE (on appointment as a Lady Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, which was founded in 1348).

Notes
1. A Baron and Baroness (usually “The Lord/Lady —”) use the more formal titles only in the most legalistic circumstances.
2. A Baron has the prefix “The Rt Hon.”
3. A Baroness by marriage sometimes uses the prefix “The Rt Hon,” but this is considered over the top and unnecessary.
4. As a DBE, Lady Soames would be styled “Dame Mary,” but not if she or her husband hold a higher honour. By 1980 she was already a Baroness (higher than DBE).
5. An LG would be styled “Lady Mary,” but not if she or her husband hold a higher honour. By 2005 she was already a Baroness, a higher honour than LG and DBE.
6. “LG” is very prestigious: there are only twenty-four KGs and LGs, excluding Royal persons, but several hundred Baronesses. “Dame Mary” would ignore the higher LG, which would make her “Lady Mary”; but both these titles are subsumed by her higher status as Baroness. “Lady Mary, The Lady Soames” is more correct, but is, I think, ponderous. Her preferred and correct title is therefore The Lady Soames LG DBE.