Churchill’s Trans-Atlantic World

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On the Cover

Wartime Canadian poster issued by the Director of Public Information. Note the
British Lion’s Churchillian cigar.
Churchill’s Trans-Atlantic World

Winston Churchill crossed the Atlantic more times than most people did before the age of jet travel. His connections with North America spanned his whole life from his first visit at the age of twenty to his last visit more than sixty years later. Many of these trips involved stops in both Canada and the United States—for both nations were tremendously important in his worldview.

Terry Reardon outlines Churchill’s evolving views about the Great Dominion and how it insistently challenged his understanding about the relationship between Britain and an Empire that was becoming a Commonwealth. How Churchill first began to profit from his North American connections is explained by Bradley Tolppanen, while Elizabeth Churchill Snell traces the Churchills’ early family history, how it crossed the Atlantic—and how it returned.

If Churchill’s imperial world remained largely centered on London, it still included room for imperial thought and strategy. Andrew Stewart explains that Churchill was the driving force behind the creation of the Imperial Defence College, or the Royal College of Defence Studies, as it has since become known.

Working the Anglo-American angle for financial gain could be dodgy. Lady Randolph Churchill’s mercurial literary effort as editor of the Anglo-Saxon Review may have failed, but, as Fred Glueckstein shows, it did bring together mother and son in a collaboration that published some of the biggest names on both sides of the Atlantic. Churchill had more luck with film. Although he often said that he made his living by his pen, it was the film rights to his writings that ultimately provided him financial security. David Lough examines how Hollywood made Churchill’s fortune, although Churchill never made much fortune for Hollywood—at least during his own lifetime.

Misunderstandings about Churchill’s career abound. One of the less important but persistently wrong impressions handed down through the years is that he was relentlessly hostile, even vindictive, towards the 1951 Festival of Britain. Iain Wilton explodes this myth by taking a good look at the record and finding the benign truth.

One indisputable fact about Churchill, however, is that he was easily moved to tears. This made him somewhat unusual for his time and class, but Andrew Roberts investigates this propensity to lachrymosity and finds it both moving and one of the sources of Churchill’s strength as a leader and humanitarian.

Finally, we are honored to present an original contribution from the present Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons. The Rt. Hon. Eleanor Laing MP considers Churchill’s views of the House in more ways than one.

David Freeman, November 2016
Churchill in Iceland
REYKJAVIK—The President of Iceland was delighted to receive representatives of the Churchill Club of Iceland and be presented with copies of Finest Hour containing Magnús Erlendsson’s article about Churchill’s visit to our country.
—Árni Sigurðsson

Churchill in Stratford
HITCHIN, HERTFORDSHIRE—With regret I write to inform you that my father, Jack Darrah, passed away peacefully on 27 September 2016. Dad was ninety-one. During his lifetime he had many hobbies and interests. Winston Churchill had been an inspiration to him, and he was so proud to live to see his collection placed at the Stratford Armouries. Thank you to everyone in the Churchill fraternity, who has been in contact since Dad’s passing, and also for the support over the years.
—Carol Harwood

2016 Churchill Conference
Washington, D. C., 27–29 October

From Sir Winston’s Granddaughter
NEW YORK CITY—Congratulations on all you did to make the conference such a resounding success! I enjoyed it tremendously.
—Edwina Sandys

From Sir Winston’s Great-grandson
CROCKHAM HILL, KENT—The Roman Empire would have been so proud of how magnificently you orchestrated the entertainment in Circus Maximus in Washington. You had presidential candidates slaying each other with blood everywhere. The conference you masterminded was vibrant, dazzling, inspiring!!
—Randolph Churchill

From Ike’s Biographer
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA—Many thanks for inviting me to the Churchill conference. I enjoyed it very much and was pleased to meet many of the leading Churchillians. I’d be more than happy to join future conferences. It was much fun, and I learned a lot too.
—Professor William I. Hitchcock

From Truman’s Biographer
ATHENS, OHIO—I enjoyed the experience enormously! You’ve built a great organization.
—Professor Alonzo Hamby

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The Victorian era was the zenith of the British Empire. It was then the superpower of the world holding sway over 300 million people, one-quarter of the world’s population.

Winston Churchill was born into the upper class, and his formative years were steeped in the belief of the greatness and righteousness of the British Empire, upon which the sun never slept. This romantic view of Britain’s position in the world remained constant all through his life.

But being a member of the upper class did not necessarily mean an upper income, and it certainly did not in the case of Winston Churchill. Thus he took full advantage of the international reputation he had earned by way of his exploits and heroics in the Boer War by embarking on a lecture tour of Britain and then North America.

He arrived in New York on 8 December 1900 and spoke in ten cities. In the United States he had faced audiences often in sympathy with the Boers; thus he was relieved when he crossed the border into Canada, where he was greeted by enthusiastic throngs—he spoke in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto on the theme “The War as I Saw It.” The Toronto Globe reported that every seat in the vast hall was occupied and that Churchill possessed a vein of humour, upon which he drew with excellent effect.

Churchill met with future Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King while in Ottawa, and the rather priggish King was not impressed with Churchill drinking champagne at 11 AM. Six years later they met again in London. King, then a senior civil servant, had crossed

Above: The Canadian Parliament, Ottawa
the Atlantic with the objective of having the British government enact legislation to curb false advertising to potential immigrants. King was not inclined to meet with Churchill in view of his previous experience, but since Churchill was Under Secretary of State for the Colonies he had no choice.

They met at a luncheon arranged by Sir Evelyn Wrench, the editor of The Spectator. Wrench recounted the event in his diary. He recorded that Churchill expressed support for the encouragement of British emigration to the colonies, with John Burns, President of the Local Government Board, responding, “Why would you wish to establish under the British flag replicas of Tooting around the seven seas?” According to Wrench, Churchill just “smiled benignly.”

**A Whole New World**

The First World War changed the geography of the old world, with long established dynasties overthrown and young countries such as Canada rapidly coming of age. Canada’s contribution was staggering—out of a population of five million, 619,000 volunteered, 61,000 were killed, and 172,000 were wounded. While the strong attachment to Britain remained, it was now becoming more of an equal partnership—this was evident when Prime Minister Robert Borden insisted that Canada sign the Versailles Treaty separately from Britain.

A further sign of independence came in 1922 and was triggered by an incident in the Chanak region of Turkey. Prime Minister Mackenzie King was asked by a reporter what would be his answer to Britain’s request for Canada to pledge troops for a possible action against the Turkish army. This was the first information that King had of the request, but he responded diplomatically that the Government would consider the matter. The procedure for communications between Britain and the Dominions involved routing through the British High Commissioner. This was a time-wasting process, and the British Colonial Minister, Churchill, had “jumped the gun” in advising the press.

The Chanak episode blew over, but it emphasized to King, anglophile though he was, that Canada could not continue in a subservient position. His first opportunity to redress the relationship came in the Imperial Conference of 1923—the British Foreign Minister, the highly articulate Lord Curzon, opened the Conference with a proposal that the British foreign minister should speak for all the Empire. King stated his position, which was that the Government of Canada would speak for itself. King eventually won the day, with the furious Curzon writing to his wife, “The obstacle has been Mackenzie King, the Canadian, who is both obstinate and stupid, and is nervous about being turned out of his own Parliament when he gets back.”

Three years later, at the 1926 Imperial Conference, King, abetted by South African Prime Minister James Hertzog, pushed for recognition of the Dominions’ independent status. This resulted in the Balfour Declaration, which stated that the Dominions “are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, although united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.” Five years later the House of Commons debated the Statute of Westminster, which was to give formal recognition to the Balfour Declaration. Churchill, the first speaker on the bill, was opposed to changes, which he saw as diminishing the pre-eminence of Britain; but he was out of step with his parliamentary colleagues, and the bill was passed.

**Into the Storm**

Mackenzie King was a firm supporter of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in his appeasement policy of Germany, and he was suspicious and uncomfortable with Churchill’s many exhortations to the British Government to increase military expenditures to keep pace with those of Germany. In 1937 King met with Hitler in Berlin, with the Führer assuring King that “you need have no fear of war at the instance of Germany. We have no desire for war, and we don’t want war. Remember that I myself have been through a war. We know what a terrible thing war is and not one of us wants to see another war.”

As we now know, Hitler was not being entirely dishonest—so long as he got what he wanted, there would be no war. King was obviously relieved by Hitler’s statement, but to his credit he stated that if Britain were attacked, Canada would come to Britain’s aid. Whether that made any impression on Hitler is not evident, but it certainly made no impact on his future decisions.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Canadian Parliament considered its position. The inter-war years had changed its relationship with Brit-
AIN—in 1914 when Britain declared war Canada was automatically at war. Twenty-five years, later Canada’s parliament debated the matter and voted almost unanimously to join the conflict.

Canada’s neglect of its military needs in the 1930s saw it ill-prepared for war. But by extraordinary measures this was remedied, and the First Canadian Division sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 10 December 1939, with further troops transported over the next two months to increase the Canadian contingent to 23,000 soldiers.

Of crucial importance was the British Commonwealth Air Training Programme to train in Canada aircrew from Britain, Canada, and other Commonwealth countries. This achieved spectacular results, with 131,000 pilots and air crew trained at a total cost of $1.6 billion, Canada assuming three-quarters of that amount. In a letter to King on 1 January 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt referred to Canada as the “Aerodrome of Democracy.”

One year later, on 1 June 1941, Mackenzie King broadcast to the people of Britain and spoke directly to Churchill: “We have been inspired by your bravery, your undaunted courage and your determination to fight to the end.” King concluded: “To us you are the personification of Britain in this her greatest hour.”

Churchill broadcast the next day to the people of Canada: “To Nazi tyrants and gangsters it must seem strange that Canada free from all compulsion and pressure, so many thousands of miles away should hasten forward into the van of the battle against the evil forces of the world...The people of Great Britain are proud of the fact that the liberty of thought and action they have won through their long romantic history should have taken root throughout the length and breadth of a continent from Halifax to Victoria.”

High praise indeed—even though Churchill’s British, paternal attitude is evident!

With the United States in the war in December 1941, Churchill arrived to discuss strategy. On 30 December 1941 he spoke in the Canadian House of Commons. This included one of his best-known utterances. Referring to the French Government when it was considering an armistice with Germany in May 1940, Churchill stated: “When I warned them that Britain would fight on alone, their generals told their Prime Minister and his divided cabinet, ‘In three weeks England will have her neck rung like a chicken.’ Some chicken!” And, when the laughter of the MPs died down: “Some neck!”

When Churchill left the House of Commons, he was photographed by Yousuf Karsh. The key image to emerge from the session became known as the Roaring Lion picture—the most famous photograph ever taken of Churchill.

While Churchill was appreciative of Canada’s significant contribution to the war, his attitude to the Dominions was still that it was a case of “The Tiger and Her Cubs.” This attitude was shared by the Americans. On 10 July 1943, Sicily was invaded. The communiqué included the “Forces of the United States and Britain.” Mackenzie King was highly indignant at the omission
of the Canadian participants. His protests were ignored, and it took a direct appeal to President Roosevelt, before the announcement was changed to “British, American and Canadian troops...”11

In spite of this insult, the communiqué drafted for Eisenhower to announce the D-Day invasion in June 1944 referred to “British and American troops.” Again it required strong protests before the change was made to “American, British and Canadian troops.”12

**A Sacred Mission**

With the end of the war, Canada counted the cost. Out of a population of eleven million, more than one million voluntarily enlisted, 47,000 were killed, and 58,000 were wounded. The total expenditure in dollar terms was $18 billion. By the end of the war, Britain had received almost $3.5 billion in gifts and loans from Canada. In addition, Canada participated in a $5 billion loan in 1946 at a nominal interest rate of 2%—the United States lending $3.8 billion and Canada $1.2 billion. Much has been made of the major assistance given by the United States to Britain, but on a per capita basis, Canada gave more than three times as much.

After the war, Churchill had to accept the reality of the diminished role of Britain in the world, including its relationship with the Dominions and the few remaining countries still in the “Empire.” Britain had long since been replaced by the United States as Canada’s largest trading partner, although Churchill’s personal standing in the country, which he referred to as the Great Dominion, was undiminished.

In January 1952 he spoke in Ottawa. At a Parliamentary Press Gallery reception Churchill showed that he understood the changing relationship with the Dominions and could even bring humour into what most thought of as his anachronistic attitude. He stated: “The Canadian Press holds a high and distinguished place among the presses of what was once called the Empire. If that word slips out [laughter], I won’t ask your pardon.”13

Churchill’s speech included references to the wartime struggle and finished with an old favourite expression of his, referring to Canada’s linchpin role: “Upon the whole surface of the globe there is no more spacious and splendid domain open to the activity and genius of man, with one hand clasped in enduring friendship with the United States, and the other spread across the ocean both to Britain and France. You have a sacred mission to discharge. That you will be worthy of it, I do not doubt. God bless you all.”14

Churchill’s final visit to Canada was in June 1954, and he spoke to the country on the radio. After the radio broadcast Moran recorded, “...as his car drove off there was loud cheering and I could see that Winston was greatly moved...as the cheering grew in volume Winston perched himself out of his seat...there, with his hat in one hand, he held up the fingers of the other in the victory sign....in the air Winston kept talking of the kindly greeting the people of Ottawa had given him. ‘I purred like a cat,’ he said. ‘I liked it very much.’”15

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**Terry Reardon** is the author of *Winston Churchill and Mackenzie King: So Similar and So Different* (2012).

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**Endnotes**

After disembarking at New York on 8 December 1900 after a six-day voyage from Liverpool, Winston Churchill was met by Major J. B. Pond, America's leading lecture agent. He had come to North America at Pond's invitation to undertake a lecture tour that would eventually encompass at least thirty-seven lectures in thirty-one cities. Unlike Churchill's first visit to America five years before, this trip was about earning money, as Churchill wrote a friend, “I pursue profit not pleasure in the States this time.”

At twenty-six Churchill had high expectations for the lecture tour. After garnering £3,700 the previous month for lecturing in Britain, he arrived in New York with a £1,000 guarantee and the hope for as much as £5,000. Churchill was encouraged in his expectations by James Burton Pond, who in his career as a lecture agent had done much to “revolutionize” the field of booking prominent figures for speaking engagements. He had managed “all the famous speakers in the country,” including Mark Twain. While he liked Pond, Twain also observed that he was “neither truthful nor sensible.”

After receiving a letter from Pond in March 1900 while he was still with the army in South Africa, Churchill followed up with the agent that summer after he was back in London. They exchanged letters confirming the date and length of the tour as well as the material for the lectures. Titled “The War as I Saw It,” Churchill’s lecture narrated his capture and escape from the Boers, the relief of Ladysmith, and his entry into Pretoria. As the tour was arranged, he did not receive, despite his requests, a contract from Pond for his lawyers to review.

Greetings from Mark Twain

On the afternoon of Churchill’s arrival, Pond had him meet the city’s newspaper reporters at his office, with Mark Twain asking the questions. The other promotional efforts devised by Pond quickly proved an embarrassment to Churchill, who thought them “vulgar.” He was advertised as “the hero of five wars,” “author of six books,” and “future Prime Minister of England,” when in fact he had served in four wars, had written five books, and had not yet even taken his seat in the House of Commons. Worse still was that Pond had created a reception committee of prominent citizens for the New York lecture without bothering to ask most of them if they wished to serve.

The first lecture of the tour took place before a large audience in Philadelphia on 11 December. Although the crowd gave him a long burst of applause as he closed, Churchill was surprised at this first outing by the pro-Boer sympathies of some of the audience. These sympathies would be prevalent at most of his American lectures. While the lecture would always remain the same, Churchill conceded that he would “sing in a different key” depending on the mood of the audience. In Canada he was more patriotic, while with skeptical American audiences he took a less bold line.

The Philadelphia lecture brought in the fixed sum of $900. During the tour Pond either hired the theatres himself or sold the lecture to a local organization for a fixed sum, which thus avoided the necessary advance work and removed the danger of a financial loss if the lecture was poorly attended. In Canada, Pond sold all the lectures to local agents. As the tour progressed, selling the lectures for a fixed sum caused Churchill great annoyance as he, according to Pond, “preferred to speculate and take all the risk.”

The following night Churchill lectured at the Waldorf Astoria in New York. With a “fashionable” audience occupying every seat, Pond declared it “one of the most brilliant affairs I have ever managed.” Twain presided and introduced Churchill. The expenses were quite large for the lecture, but Pond claimed a profit of $1,150.35, of which Churchill received $766.90.
Accompanied by Pond, Churchill next lectured at New Haven on 13 December. Churchill was displeased that the appearance had been sold to a local organization for $300 and assured Pond that his only concern on the tour was financial. The following afternoon he spoke in Washington to an audience that included the British ambassador. While praising the lecture, a reporter observed that Churchill spoke in a “jerky, hesitating way,” which can be attributed to his being ill with a temperature of 102 degrees. The illness also probably contributed to problems with Pond, who thought the Englishman, unhappy with the Washington appearance, was “disagreeable and ugly.”

**Deteriorating Situation**

Issues between the lecturer and agent worsened the next day in Baltimore, as Churchill spoke before a crowd of only a few hundred in a venue that seated 5,000. Churchill was finding out that, contrary to what he had been told by Pond, there was not the same interest in the tour as there had been in England. He gave Pond a talking to off-stage. Churchill told the agent that he would not continue with the tour, but Pond reassured him that the next lecture in Boston would be a success. The lecture had been sold for $500 and the local organizers would work hard to recoup their investment. While Churchill was growing disenchanted with Pond, the American had his own issues with his lecturer. According to Pond, among the expenses he had to cover was the pint of champagne Churchill drank with every breakfast.

Churchill and Pond arrived in Boston on 16 December and checked into the Hotel Touraine. That day Pond brought Winston Churchill, the American novelist, to the hotel to meet the British Winston Churchill. The meeting of the two Winston Churchills received a great deal of press attention, which can be attributed to Pond’s taking advantage of every promotional opportunity. The Boston lecture at the Tremont Temple that evening was, as Pond predicted, a financial success. As it had been sold for a fixed sum, however, Pond smirked that “it broke Mr. Churchill’s heart that some others were to reap the profits.”

After lecturing in New Bedford on 18 December, Churchill spoke next in Hartford and then in Springfield. At the last two locales, Pond had booked the theatres himself. It was, however, the week before Christmas, a time when provincial theatres were usually closed. At Hartford, Churchill received just £10, while at Springfield a profit of a little over $200 was achieved. The Englishman was learning the hard way the truth of Twain’s remark that “if you get half as much as Pond prophesied, be content & praise God—it has not happened to another.” A disappointed Churchill wished to leave immediately to spend Christmas in Ottawa, but was dissuaded by the argument that it would be an “acknowledgement that the tour was a failure.”

After Springfield, Pond went home for Christmas, while Churchill went to Fall River, Massachusetts, for an appearance on 21 December. It was the oddest of the tour. Churchill had been booked to speak at a private party at the home of a local industrialist, John S. Brayton. Despite his misgivings that he had been hired out like a “conjuror,” Churchill nonetheless was “charming.” He was paid £40.

Churchill travelled to Ottawa, where he spent several days over Christmas as the guest of Lord and Lady Minto, the governor-general and his wife. On his arrival, he was perhaps distracted from his problems with Pond by finding that another guest was Pamela Plowden, with whom he had had a romance that was by then fading. Churchill later wrote his mother that there had been “no painful discussions” with Plowden.

There were, however, painful discussions on 26 December between Pond and Churchill in Montreal,
where the Englishman lectured at a sold-out Windsor Hall. While the lecture was entertaining, Churchill was furious with Pond, who had rejoined him in the city. Since every ticket had been sold for the lecture, Churchill thought that by selling it for a fixed sum Pond had thrown money away. It had been foolishness, in Churchill’s opinion, to have sold the Canadian dates for a fixed rate no matter the box office. These were some of the best towns on the tour, and it was costing him money.

Pond claims he was berated both before the lecture and again after it was over. The Englishman said the financial arrangements were “unfair and inequitable” and that he was being “exploited” for the benefit of Pond, his agents, and his friends. He had received $300 for Montreal, with the remaining “$900 being swallowed up by others.” The next day in Ottawa, Churchill again expressed annoyance about the local agents taking an extra share of the profits at his expense. He declared that he would not lecture beyond the Canadian capital unless a fair share of the profits was arranged, which he insisted was a 55% guarantee of all receipts. Against this background, Churchill lectured that evening to a full house at the Russell Theatre. As the lecture ended, Pond had an assistant hand Churchill a note urging him to fulfill his Canadian dates and go to Brantford, where he was next scheduled to lecture. After reading the note, Churchill told Pond, “I won’t go. There’s nothing in it for me. Look at this great audience and I only get $300 out of it.”

At an impasse, Churchill remained in Ottawa, and Pond left for Toronto, where he met the Canadian sub-agent William Houston on the morning of 28 December. With their speaker on strike in Ottawa, they agreed that the sold-out appearance in Brantford was lost. Houston then cabled Churchill that he held a contract signed by Pond as his representative for a series of Canadian lectures, including Toronto the next evening, and threatened “heavy damages if that contract is not fulfilled.” Pond probably gave an interview to the newspapers that day saying that Churchill had demanded half the proceeds from the $1300 house in Montre-
al, even though he had an agreement calling for a fixed sum of $250 for each lecture. He warned that the Englishman “must keep to his contract or take the consequences.” While he thought Pond’s press remarks were “very mendacious,” Churchill gave out his own statement that day in Ottawa that was not, perhaps, entirely complete. In it he claimed he had cancelled Brantford only because, having been ill earlier in the tour, he was too exhausted to undertake an all-night train journey to the city.12

On the morning of 29 December, Churchill arrived in Toronto and secured the legal services of Zebulon Lash, one of Canada’s most successful lawyers, before he met with Pond. While awaiting the meeting at Rossin House, Pond spoke with a reporter saying that his lecturer was a “genius,” but an “excitable genius” in regard to money. He added that while Churchill was now a young man, “when he is Prime Minister he will know more.”13 The conference began at 10:30 that morning and lasted for two and a half hours, with Houston arriving midway. With the assistance of Lash, matters were apparently resolved to Churchill’s satisfaction. After the Toronto lecture, his fees were apparently now to be paid on a percentage basis. Having reached an agreement, both Pond and Churchill released statements denying the lecturer had threatened to cancel the tour, with the American adding a complete denial of the interview that had been reported to have taken place the previous day. He said the statement attributed to him was “incorrect, entirely unauthorized by me, and unwarranted.”14

Life Lessons

After the “most unpleasant squabble” with Pond, Churchill wrote his mother that he was “not in the best of spirits.” The tour was “unpleasant work,” and Pond was “a vulgar Yankee impresario.” He did take pride that “there is not one person in a million who at my age could have earned £10,000 without capital in less than two years.”15

Despite the tempest, the evening’s lecture to a 4,000-strong audience at Toronto’s Massey Hall went ahead as scheduled. As a preface to his usual lecture, Churchill nervously denied reports that he had cancelled the Brantford engagement for “sordid” motives.16 With the issue of the fees resolved, the remaining Canadian and American dates were completed over the next month, with the final lecture of the tour held on 31 January at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Despite high hopes at the outset, Churchill had made a disappointing £1,600 from the lectures. Writing to Pond on the last day of the tour, he expressed a fear that he had been “unreasonable,” but he did think Pond had poorly managed the tour. Two days later Churchill sailed for England and the opening of Parliament. He retained regrets about the tour. Six years later, speaking in London with the future Canadian prime minister Mackenzie King, whom he had met in Ottawa, Churchill laughed and remarked, “I did make a frightful ass of myself on that trip, didn’t I?”17


Endnotes

4. MMS 624, James B. Pond Papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, DE. Hereafter cited as Pond Papers.
5. Ibid.
9. CHAR 28/26/80–82; Fall River Daily Herald, 22 December 1900.
10. CHAR 28/26/80–82.
12. CHAR 28/26/80–82; Pond Papers; Boston Sunday Post, 30 December 1900; New York Times, 29 December 1900.
15. CHAR 28/26/80–82.
When I was a very young girl in Nova Scotia and first learned the name of my grandfather Churchill, it seemed to be all over the radio. But I did not know what the word “war” meant, and neither did I know that chasing the Churchill name would become a lifetime’s preoccupation.

My mother was the last in a direct line of ten generations of Churchills in North America that originally came from Dorset. The first generation settled in the Plymouth colony around 1643. Subsequently, the family moved to Nova Scotia in 1762. A great-grandson of the first Nova Scotian Churchill settler, Lemuel, later moved from Chebogue Point near Yarmouth to Hantsport.

The Nova Scotian Churchills were shipbuilders in the age of sail and wood. Ultimately, they had one of the larger fleets in the world. As evidence I still have a closet filled with china and dolls brought back to my mother from the four corners of the earth. Besides shipbuilding, my great-great-grandfather Ezra became a member of the first legislature in Canada and later was appointed a post-Confederation senator in Ottawa about 1867.

My mother’s father, Randolph Winston Churchill, the one whom I had thought was all over the radio, joined the Canadian army in 1914. He was commissioned in the 112th Battalion and then sent to France, having requested reversion in rank to get into the fighting. He found it and was wounded several times but survived through to the Armistice. Sadly, I never knew him.

From early on, I found all of this fascinating. It made me a precocious reader, researcher, and writer to such an extent that my parents sent me to a college in Missouri to study drama and journalism. At the end of my first year, I was offered the opportunity to audition at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. I went, I acted, I was accepted, I declined.

Perhaps it was because I was homesick and wanted to continue my studies closer to home, which I did, but perhaps it was also because there had been a marvellous little drama on the small ship on which I sailed to Britain. My sister and I were standing together on the deck deeply engrossed in a little notebook in which we were writing when a gentleman spoke to us: “Would you two young ladies consider it impertinent—I’ve walked past you several times—if I asked you what you are doing?” “Not at all, sir,” we replied, “we just are starting to write a book. Perhaps you would like to put your name in it.”

Just like that we had the autograph of the famous Newfoundland Premier Joey Smallwood, who at this time was deep in the throes of consulting with Winston Churchill regarding the creation of the British Newfoundland Development Corporation, which was modelled along the lines of the ancient East India and Hudson Bay Companies. Later, after Churchill died in 1965, Smallwood had the corporation’s hydroelectric-power structure in Labrador re-named Churchill Falls.

Once we were happily ensconced in London, the first place we visited was the House of Commons, hoping Sir Winston would be there. We were told he was sitting in his usual seat below the gangway. On this first visit, we did not hear him speak, but we prayed that in time we would be rewarded.

Fulfillment

In time, as it turned out, I married James Snell, whose own family had also emigrated from Britain to North America. This sealed it. I determined to become an authority on the British Churchill family and thence to draw the North American line ineluctably into the fold.
James was in the business of exporting housing materials and was taken under the wing of Donald Smith, Agent General for Nova Scotia in London. Smith found us a site in Devon for which architectural plans had been drawn prior to the war. We were told if we adhered to the original plans, we could build.

Most of the time James would be back either in Canada or in his other offices overseas while I, alone in Devon, worked on my Churchill family history book. What bolstered me was a handwritten letter I received in June 1991 from Martin Gilbert, Churchill’s official biographer. “I had to start my research Nov. 1874 and eschew the many temptations to wend my way backwards,” Gilbert wrote, “so although I can be of no service to you, I would indeed love to continue to learn of your discoveries.”

As I was beginning to complete the manuscript, however, I began to worry. How to publish? Would I not be turned down because most of my subject was not in England? Who did I think I was anyway?

I inquired among the friends I had made in Britain as to what I should do. Nothing much happened for a while. Then one or two spoke to me about a well-known publisher who would be speaking on a particular night and suggested I attend. “But I hardly know where that is. Will one or two of you come with me?” “Sorry, we’re busy. We’ll draw a map for you.”

Fearfully I went, and, near tears, approached the publisher: “Sir, I am a Canadian, and I have been directed to you this evening because I have written a manuscript about the Churchill family. Do you think I could make an appointment to show it to you.” Charmingly, he replied: “I know, I’ve been told about you coming alone. Your friends wanted to know if you had the courage to accost me.” Success!

Before The Churchills: Pioneers and Politicians was published in 1994, my new friend had personally edited every word with me. There was a National Trust Estate book launch, BBC radio interviews all over the place, a ceremonial placing of a copy beside the books of my favourite historian, A. L. Rowse, in the Long Library at Blenheim Palace, and many similar ceremonies elsewhere, including the Imperial War Museum and the library of the House of Commons.

Invitations

Back in Nova Scotia that summer, I received an exciting phone call from Richard Langworth, President of the International Churchill Society, inviting me to speak in Banff along with the Society’s Patron Mary Soames. An invitation to appear with Sir Winston Churchill’s youngest child was not to be declined.

After that exciting event, I received my first handwritten letter from Mary. She was still writing me years later. In one letter, in which we were discussing videocassettes, she wrote: “But I was revolted by that old dodderer who appeared at the beginning of each

Minterne House
episode with a boy asking him questions—apparently (the old d_ _ _ _ _ _ r) was meant to be WSC?! Well you could have fooled me.”

And it was not the last that I heard from Richard Langworth either. He asked me to speak in Devon and Dorset about the Churchill family roots to be found there to a group of Churchillian visiting from North America. If I say so myself, and the packed crowd consistently did, the event was a success. However, the best success to come of this for James and me was our discovery of Minterne House, ancestral home of the Digby family.

First we explored the original Churchill family house of Round Chimneys, a late Elizabethan manor house at Wootton Glanville (now Glanville’s Wootton) not far from the church in the Dorset village of Minterne Magna, which has several early Churchill family monuments. We then studied the history of the little church itself, and, finally, we inquired of Lord Digby.

Lord D was a love. He met my husband and me along with our daughter Jaime at Minterne House, which his family purchased in the eighteenth century. He rushed me to view the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller, which he had long been trying to find, of General Charles Churchill, who had inherited Minterne in 1698 and was the younger brother of the first Duke of Marlborough. Lord Digby also showed me a copy of my book prominently opened on a table, as well as a flat that opened into the tapestry room.

I asked if the huge handworks went back to the time of Charles, and Lord Digby said he would search. I then replied: “If so, I want to come here.” James and Jaime later both laughingly told me, “That is not what you are supposed to say.” Before we had left, however, Lord Digby had showed me his private archives and the drawer where I could find its key.

Why so for all of this?

Lord Digby’s sister, Pamela, first had married Randolph Churchill, the son of Winston; he himself was very interested in my American and Canadian Churchill background, and Dorset was the place to research the Churchill family’s early history. In short, it was all very well with Lord Digby that Winston Churchill had been born at Blenheim, but he wanted to know about the family antecedents as well.

By 2005 James and myself were into our fifth year of leasing the divine flat at Minterne. I was starting to spread the story of the Hon. Charles Churchill and was very proud that the editors of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* had changed their entry on Gen. Churchill, that extremely capable younger brother, to include my findings. I was also telling the story of the importance of the Minterne monuments.

**Departures**

While we had made many friends in Britain, including various members of the Churchill family, James had begun to be ill. We returned home to Canada, and with heartbreak I asked Jaime to close out our beloved flat so I could always be with James.

After my book had been published, Richard Langworth had asked me to interview Peregrine Churchill, the second son of Winston’s brother Jack. For many years, Peregrine had been one of two trustees of Sir Winston’s Chartwell Trust. In fact he had been executor, trustee, or administrator of many family estates reaching back to those of his grandparents Jennie and Lord Randolph Churchill. Financially prudent, Peregrine through the years had shored up many family losses and loans.

More than that, it was Peregrine who personally transported many of his uncle’s archival papers to safekeeping during the war to the family’s summer home, Holworth House, on the Dorset coast. Educated at Harrow and Cambridge, Peregrine laughingly told me, “I shared digs on Jesus Lane with Victor Rothschild, father of Jacob. He kept me to work some of his differential equations.”

This had been about the time that James and I had moved to Minterne. Quite shortly afterward, Peregrine died. I tried to carry on with his charming French wife
Yvonne, who had moved to London, but the book Peregrine had wanted me to write never got written.

**New Directions**

Although that book did not get written, thanks to Churchill Archives Director Allen Packwood, another one, *Churchill Coffers*, did. It consisted of ten chapters covering the Dorset origins of the Churchills down to Sir Winston’s namesake grandson. When Allen sent me a letter to say that the new book had been added to the Churchill Archives library, I wept. And how much better than three years of hard work lying around somewhere on shelves in bookstores?

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Sir Winston’s death, I wrote a twenty-page booklet with the collaboration of Allen Packwood and his staff about the monuments in the Minterne Magna church. On the cover is an image of the 1659 floor plaque [see back cover], which is the earliest verifiable Churchill family memorial. It is a dedicated to family patriarch John Churchill, whose namesake grandson became the first Duke of Marlborough. John began the process of raising the family status above the level of mere tenant farmers.

He became a lawyer and started a tradition of marrying up by wedding Sarah, the heiress of Sir Henry Winston. Their son became the first Sir Winston Churchill.

There are two other early family memorials. The first is for Ellen, one of the daughters of the first Sir Winston, who died in 1673 at age twenty-one and was a sister of the second John Churchill—that is, the first duke. The other is a large marble monument to the memory of General Charles Churchill, brother to both Ellen and John.

In January 2015, two days of events were held at Minterne. Sir Winston’s great-grandson Randolph Churchill spoke, as Lord Digby did himself. Lady Digby and Randolph’s mother Minnie met me with huge hugs and smiles, saying, “Elizabeth, you have created all this chaos.”

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For Britain and its Empire, a period of intense reflection and debate followed the conclusion of the bloodbath that had been the First World War. One of the main themes discussed was how in the event of another war, military resources and forces that were scattered around the world could be better prepared, co-ordinated, managed, and led. This was not new. Similar discussions had taken place since at least 1890, when the Hartington Commission had proposed the establishment of a naval and military council. In 1904 Arthur Balfour took over the chairmanship of a Cabinet Defence Committee, and, with the prime minister in the chair, it was renamed the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) and seen “as an attempt to create an Imperial General Staff on a temporary basis.”1 It had its own dedicated secretariat, but, with no executive powers, its ability to function effectively was seriously hampered. Following the outbreak of war in 1914, the CID ceased to meet. It was more than four years later, in November 1919, before it re-convened, by which point it was clear that there had been significant changes not just to the international system but also to the imperial network which held such an important role within it.

Questions were now raised about whether the CID was the most effective means for the co-ordination of imperial defence. Aside from the tremendous loss of life suffered by all of the territories that had fought for King George V, the conflict had left Britain’s finances in a parlous state. In the summer of 1921 David Lloyd George had established a special committee to review expenditure chaired by Sir Eric Geddes, a businessman who had played a prominent wartime role in helping organise military transportation. The interim report was presented to the prime minister in December and within its recommendations were proposals for major cuts to the military. Although he no longer had any direct involvement in the War Office or Air Ministry, having moved in November 1921 to take control of the Colonial Office, amongst the report’s most vocal critics was Winston Churchill.

In terms of security or military matters “his manner was forward and he argued from a more formidable knowledge than most ministers,” and he remained a leading voice on security and defence matters.2 As for the prime minister, who looked to reduce the military to a level that would free up the necessary resources for his preferred social projects, he appeared more sanguine about Geddes’ conclusions. He therefore established another committee—the succinctly titled “Cabinet Committee appointed to examine part 1 of the first interim report of the Committee on National Expenditure”—to provide a more detailed examination of just how far expenditure could be reduced without causing danger to national security. Churchill was appointed to chair the committee, which included Lord Birkenhead, Edwin Montagu, and Stanley Baldwin. With his stature and experience, the former Secretary of State for War was the obvious choice for the role, and during January and February 1922 these men reviewed the proposals.
Two years before, Churchill had also been the first to propose that a Joint Staff College be established, arguing that it was “essential that a General should think, not only in terms of soldiers, but also in terms of ships and air forces, and vice versa.” Although he had previously opposed the idea that foreign policy-making should be a collective endeavour, he did also possess an incisive knowledge of imperial affairs. For some of his colleagues, however, he held distinctly dated views about the British Empire; according to one senior colleague, Churchill’s standard diplomatic approach had been to make sure that “the Colonial PMs should be given a good time and sent away well banqueted, but empty-handed.”

A Dazzling Super-Minister

Having held several meetings to discuss the Geddes report, on 21 March Churchill explained to the House of Commons his committee’s findings and confirmed that, whilst some of the original recommendations had been rejected (notably the idea that the Royal Air Force should be broken up and its aircraft split between the other two Services), it had been accepted that military reductions were needed. He also revealed that it was now clear to him at this stage that no single ministry—a Ministry of Defence—could be established, despite his previously having offered support for the idea of a co-ordinating body. This he put down to “the particular prejudices” of the three services, which remained to be “shaken down.” He went on to add that there was the issue of finding a person to head it who would have to be “such a dazzling super-Minister that he would dwarf all the rest of his colleagues.” Churchill concluded by proposing that the most sensible approach was instead to create “a body of officers trained to look at the problem of war as a whole and not merely from a land, or sea, or air point of view”—what he described as “the beginnings of a common brain for the three Services.” To do this, the establishment of two new groups was announced, both of which would consider the issue further. One of these, the “Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence to consider institution of Joint Staff College,” was intended to examine specifically the potential implications for military education, and in March Churchill was asked by Sir Maurice Hankey, the already long-serving secretary of the CID, for his opinions as to who should sit on it alongside him.

In September, the Sub-Committee’s composition was confirmed, with Churchill once again in the chair, along with three representatives selected from each of the Service Ministries. Before it could be convened for its first meeting, however, the November 1922 General Election was held, and Churchill’s unexpected loss...
of his Dundee seat prevented the originally-nominated chairman from taking up his appointment. Instead the role went to Major The Hon. E. F. L. Wood MP, President of the Board of Education and later 1st Earl of Halifax, and on 20 February 1923 its first formal session took place. By this point Churchill had withdrawn to the South of France, where he spent the next six months working on his five-volume epic *The World Crisis.*

Despite his absence, the Sub-Committee entirely accepted Churchill’s arguments, although without offering any official recognition of his previous role or influence. There was, however, only indifferent political and military support and, despite the Wood Report being submitted to the CID in December 1923 where it was accepted in principle, it would take another three years for it to advance any further. Churchill, by then restored to a position of influence following his appointment as the Chancellor of Exchequer, once again offered his support, and, with the college’s establishment finally agreed, in January 1927 the first course commenced.

**Churchill’s Contribution**

W hilst it was not always acknowledged at the time, the central role Churchill had played in the creation of the Imperial Defence College became much more widely recognised after the Second World War. For the college’s re-opening in April 1946, with the great British general Sir William Slim as its first post-war commandant, an information sheet was prepared as part of a press conference organised to publicise the event. In an early draft of this document, it was suggested that it had been Hankey who had, in fact, been the driving force behind the idea. General Sir Leslie Hollis, who had worked alongside Churchill for much of the war and was at this point still Assistant Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, reviewed the minute and intervened to point out that it had in fact been the wartime prime minister who was “the moving spirit in the idea of an Imperial Defence College.” From this point on it became commonly accepted wisdom that the two were irrevocably connected, and, as one of those selected to attend the college the following year later wrote, it was understood that it was “one of Winston Churchill’s inspired creations.”

The great tragedy for the college is that Churchill was never actually able to demonstrate his tremendous intellectual and oratorical skills in front of its Members (the term used to refer to those who attend the course). He was due to have given a lecture in 1936, the invitation highlighting that his absence from the names of those who had spoken previously to the college was “a very notable omission.” It was therefore proposed that he should come and speak on some aspect of the “Higher Direction of War,” but no gap could be found in his busy diary, and he was forced to decline. Two years later he was approached once again, and the invitation was accepted. Scheduled to speak in October 1938 following the Munich crisis, Churchill wrote to the then commandant Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore “that he was so distressed by the change in the situation that he hadn’t the heart to address himself to the task to which he had been invited.” No indication can be found of his finding an alternate date to speak before the war began, and there is no evidence of his ever having spoken after the war at Seaford House, the home of the college since 1946; the only established physical link is that during his second term in office as prime minister what is today the commandant’s apartment was used by his chauffeur.

Currently some fifty nations each year send high-ranking military officers and civil servants who join representatives from Britain’s political system and the country’s commercial sector in attending the senior college of the UK’s Defence Academy. The modern-day Members who attend the Royal College of Defence Studies, the contemporary name for Churchill’s creation, are part of an ever-expanding international community which owes its existence to the foresight shown by Britain’s leading politician and statesman. Today there are many visual references to the great man, which can be seen throughout the college buildings. The student body are unlikely, however,
to notice the crest and armorial bearings, which also highlight Churchill's great contribution. Known affectionately as the “Beast,” within its heraldic design there is reference to the Royal Navy, the British Army, the Royal Air Force, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Royal Crown. A final element takes the form of two supporters, a wolf from Hankey’s coat of arms and, on the other side, Churchill’s lion. This offers an enduring recognition of the role both played in the college’s establishment.

In terms of the many important political achievements he accomplished during his long career, this lesser-known act, initiated when Churchill was Colonial Secretary, would go on to have a massive impact both for Britain and what was to become the Commonwealth of Nations. His idea of creating what he termed a “common brain” meant that, when the Second World War began, there was already established a network of senior military officers and government officials who could work together to help safeguard the British Empire’s future. As the college celebrates its ninetieth anniversary, his legacy remains stronger than ever.

Endnotes
6. “Report of the Sub-Committee,” 11 May 1923, CAB 16/45, TNA. The Salisbury Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence met throughout the first half of 1923 to consider more specifically the question of a Ministry of Defence and concluded that this was not advisable. The suggestion put forward instead was that the three Chiefs of Staff should be formed into a standing Sub-Committee, which became centrally involved in how the IDC was to be managed.
7. Hollis to Major-General Norman Jolley (Secretary, IDC), 3 May 1946, CAB 121/257, TNA.
10. Ibid., Churchill to Dawny, 8 October 1936.

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The Festival of Britain has certainly earned some interesting and pithy descriptions in the sixty-five years since it was staged. In the words of its Director-General, Gerald Barry, it represented “a tonic to the nation” after twenty years in which Britons had successively endured economic depression, total warfare and acute post-war austerity. In the case of Winston Churchill, however, several historians have claimed that he saw the Festival in a very different and darker light. In particular, various commentators have alleged that Churchill (then Leader of the Opposition) was vehemently opposed to the venture and regarded it as “three-dimensional socialist propaganda.”

While this dramatic phrase has been used repeatedly, it is equally striking that it has never been properly sourced. As a result, it is surely high time to consider whether Churchill was as hostile to the Festival as this alleged comment suggests and a number of historians have asserted. Alternatively, does any firmer evidence exist to show that his stance towards the project was actually conciliatory or even supportive, in sharp contrast to the historical consensus that has developed since the Festival took place?

**Expected Antagonism?**

It would be understandable if Churchill had been every bit as antagonistic to the venture as so many previous accounts have suggested. In terms of its personnel, for example, the Festival of Britain (inspired by the centenary of 1851’s Great Exhibition) could have hardly have been more provocative to the once and future Prime Minister. Above all, perhaps, Churchill often held the then Lord President and main Festival Minister, Herbert Morrison, in particularly low esteem, especially after “Lord Festival” (as he was nicknamed) had blamed Churchill for a wartime disaster in his Lewisham constituency, agitated for an early end to his wartime coalition, and then questioned his right to draw a salary as Leader of the Opposition when, after 1945, other commitments often kept him away from Westminster.

In similar vein, the project’s Director-General had hardly been chosen with a view to securing Churchill’s enthusiastic backing for the Festival. On the contrary, Churchill had long been antagonised by Gerald Barry during the latter’s spell as editor of the *News Chronicle*, not least during the Second World War.

Some of Barry’s day-to-day decision-making as Director-General can be seen as just as provocative as his newspaper’s written words. For example, the Festival logo was designed by Abram Games, who had produced a famous health-themed wartime poster (“Your Britain. Fight for It Now”) which Churchill described as “a disgraceful libel on the conditions prevailing in Great Britain before the war.” Similarly, Barry’s appointee as the Festival’s architecture director, Hugh Casson, had been a wartime activist in the Commonwealth Party, which Churchill regarded as irresponsible for contesting by-elections while the conflict was ongoing. In his view, such polls were “completely out of keeping with the gravity of the times,” when “the future of our country and, indeed, of all civilisation is in the melting pot.”

**Myth and Reality**

In such circumstances, it is easy to appreciate why so many historians have argued or assumed that Churchill was profoundly hostile to the Festival from its official inception (in December 1947) to its formal closure (in September 1951) and even beyond. Indeed, as several of their works have pointed out, the Festival’s centrepiece site (on London’s South Bank) was largely demolished during Churchill’s peacetime premiership, which began within a month of the Festival ending.

Other writers have contended that Churchill’s hostility was less protracted, but no less intense, by suggesting that his previously “vituperative criticisms” of the project were either reduced or even ended by the appointment (in March 1948) of his close friend and
wartime chief-of-staff, Lord “Pug” Ismay, as Chairman of the Festival Council. However, each of these arguments needs to be reassessed in the light of four sets of evidence, which show or suggest that Churchill was far less antagonistic towards the Festival than previous accounts have argued or implied.

First, Churchill’s political record indicates that he tended to support, rather than oppose, the concept of Britain staging major national and international celebrations. As long ago as 1921, as Colonial Secretary, he had been heavily involved in planning the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, which took place three years later. On its closure, moreover, Churchill led the way in arguing (successfully) that it should be reopened in 1925: as he wrote to Stanley Baldwin, the then Prime Minister, another season would be “like having a second brew of tea out of the same pot.” More recently, while serving in 10 Downing Street himself, Churchill had been content for London to replace Helsinki as the venue for the 1948 Olympic Games, which proved to be enormously successful (despite Britain’s ongoing economic austerity). Opposing the Festival would, therefore, have been a departure from previous practice as far as Churchill was concerned.

Secondly and more substantively, a simple examination of Churchill’s comments in Parliament shows that he was generally silent on the Festival before and after Ismay’s appointment to its supervisory Council, confounding the oft-repeated suggestion that “Pug” had been appointed in order to end the supposed stream of criticisms from his close friend and former political master. In reality, Churchill had long been silent on the subject already and was happy to let the relevant Labour Ministers be “shadowed” by reasonably senior Conservative colleagues. As they did so, their comments included Walter Elliot (a former Scottish Secretary) welcoming the original announcement about the Festival as “a good proposal” and “a worthy object,” while, in the House of Lords, Lord Tweedsmuir wished the project “Godspeed” from the Opposition frontbench.

Such comments hardly suggest that either the Conservatives in general or Churchill, as the party’s leader, were “dead against” the Festival, as Casson later claimed and successive studies have accepted. Indeed, when
Churchill himself finally spoke on the subject, in October 1950, his words were also positive in nature. As he explained in a debate on the King’s Speech (before being interrupted by a Labour backbencher): “We are going to have a Festival of Britain next year in which both Parties will take part. We shall do our best to help the Government to make the Festival a success....”

Such supportive words even prompted Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee to propose that they undertake a joint visit to the South Bank to show that the Government and the Opposition were equally committed to the Festival’s success. As Attlee concluded, “The value of such a visit would be very great.”

It was a suggestion that Churchill willingly accepted although the initiative (planned for early December 1950) proceeded to be overtaken by events when Attlee headed, instead, to the United States for urgent discussions with President Truman about the deepening Korean War.

Parliamentary records also provide the third (and most conclusive) set of evidence to show that Churchill and the Conservatives were far more sympathetic towards the Festival of Britain than has previously been understood. In short, four pieces of enabling legislation were necessary to allow the Festival to be staged and, as the Official Report shows, each received unqualified Conservative support. Indeed, all four Bills were allowed to pass “on the nod” (in other words, without a vote) in both the Commons and the Lords. While such support has been ignored in a whole range of recent studies, it attracted considerable comment at the time in publications ranging from the New York Times (whose readers were informed that Churchill’s “opposition party tacitly has supported the Government’s plans”) to some campaign literature produced by the Labour Party itself, which conceded that Conservative “leaders have all along supported the Festival.”

Fourthly and finally, it is noticeable that Churchill became an active contributor to the Festival as its public opening drew near. The displays on the South Bank included both a corrected proof of his Memoirs of the Second World War (on which Ismay had worked as a key adviser) and a valuable cigarette box, which Festival organisers were allowed to borrow after offering (as one of them put it) “the firmest assurances of safety... against a firm conviction by Sir Winston that he would not see it again,” which, embarrassingly, he did not.

Away from the South Bank, Churchill even entered his best racehorse, Colonist II, in a celebratory race meeting (the Festival of Britain Stakes) at Ascot.

Yet despite his actions as a racehorse owner, a contributor to the South Bank’s exhibitions, and (above all) as a party leader, the Festival of Britain did not receive Churchill’s unequivocal support. In late 1950, for example, he voted against plans to allow the Festival Pleasure Gardens’ funfair to open on Sundays (which Morrison favoured to help balance the project’s books, but Churchill opposed on moral grounds) and, early the next year, he privately expressed “increasing doubts” about Britain staging a national festival while the international situation was so bleak.

In the event, though, his support was never withdrawn, and he gave every impression of enjoying the South Bank’s formal opening in early May. It certainly appears to have introduced him to escalators and, in the process, provided the elder statesman with plenty of child-like entertainment and delight. According to David Kynaston, the distinguished British historian, Churchill had always been “a taxi rather than a Tube man” and proceeded to ride the escalators repeatedly in preference to seeing the Festival’s actual exhibits!

Just as previous accounts have claimed that Churchill “loathed” the Festival as Leader of the Opposition, it has also been suggested, repeatedly, that his dislike of the project was so intense that he behaved vindictively towards the South Bank after returning as Prime Minister in the wake of the General Election in October 1951. For instance, John Tusa has referred to the “vengeful despoliation of the site” under the Conservatives, Lesley Gillilan has criticised the “churlish”
conduct by Churchill and his Ministers, and Mary Banham claimed that almost every exhibition building was “smashed and carted away the day after the Festival closed—an act of vandalism claimed to have been ordered by Churchill” himself.16 Such claims have contributed to the perception of Churchill leading a new government, which was philistine in nature, vindictive towards its inheritance from Attlee’s administration, and far keener to stage an essentially backward-looking Coronation (in 1953) than to preserve the futuristic architecture of so many Festival buildings. As a result, the historical reputation of Churchill’s peacetime premiership has been tarnished by his perceived approach to the Festival and its physical legacy, especially its iconic architectural symbol, the “Sky- lòn.”

Again, however, the evidence points in a rather different direction and contradicts the portrait painted collectively by Hillier, Gillilan, and Tusa. For example, not only did the Festival close in the last few weeks of the Labour Government, rather than in the early days of its Conservative successor, but contemporary accounts confirm that bulldozers had moved onto the South Bank well before Churchill moved back into Downing Street. Similarly, the archives of the London County Council (which was then Labour-controlled) reveal that its leaders were keen for the South Bank to be cleared as soon as possible so that the site’s long-term redevelopment could get underway.

Finally, an abundance of evidence shows that the various exhibition buildings, with the sole exception of the Royal Festival Hall, had been designed to last for the five months of the Festival but not beyond, with Cason even welcoming their “impermanence” (in a 1950 lecture) on the basis that it encouraged “an uninhibited even playful approach to design.”17 Many were consequently demolished under Churchill’s premiership but hardly on his orders or for spiteful political reasons, as so many previous accounts have suggested.

A Second Brew of Tea

Indeed, Churchill’s entirely pragmatic approach to the whole project is perhaps best demonstrated by the case of the Festival Pleasure Gardens, in Battersea. Far from calling for their demolition, Churchill approved plans for the Gardens’ re-opening in 1952, a move which increased the Festival’s legacy and was expected (wrongly) to reduce the enormous debts which had been accumulated, largely due to chronic mismanagement, during their construction. It was hardly an example of Churchill regarding the Festival as “three-dimensional socialist propaganda.” It was, more prosaically, his latest attempt to get “a second brew” from the same pot of tea. It

Iain Wilton recently completed his Ph.D. at Queen Mary, University of London. He has also written a major biography of the English sportsman, writer and politician C. B. Fry; among much else, it covers each of Fry’s key encounters with Churchill.

Endnotes
1. Daily Mail Festival of Britain Preview and Guide, undated, p. 3.
2. For example, Sue MacGregor, Festival Times, Festival of Britain Society, Edition 50, autumn 2003, p. 9.
Lady Randolph told of a London gathering where Twain asked Mrs. J. Comyns-Carr, “You are an American, aren’t you?” Mrs. Carr explained that she was of English stock and had been brought up in Italy. “Ah, that’s it,” answered Twain. “It’s your complexity of background that makes you seem American. We are rather a mixture, of course. But I can pay you no higher compliment than to mistake you for a countryman of mine.” While American-born Lady Randolph found Twain’s comments extremely amusing, it is doubtful that Mrs. Comyns-Carr did.

Other social events often brought Lady Randolph into contact with writers. When Stephen Crane and his wife rented Brede Place, a feudal home in Sussex built in 1350, Lady Randolph and her sisters attended a three-day party that Crane gave for sixty guests, which included Henry James, Joseph Conrad, H. Rider Haggard, and H. G. Wells.

Lady Randolph’s esteem of literature and writers inspired her in late 1898 to conceive the idea of starting a literary magazine. She envisioned a quarterly miscellany edited by herself that contained articles of verse, fiction, and essays by contributors considered to be among the finest writers on both sides of the Atlantic. Each issue was to be individually decorated in a stylish pattern of gilt tooling on leather covers.

Lady Randolph foresaw the magazine as one of such literary excellence that it would be read with interest and pleasure by educated people. It would be a luxurious-looking magazine with significant writing and would be bought by the upper class through subscription and kept in their library.

It is Founded

Lady Randolph’s son Winston was extremely enthusiastic about his mother’s idea. Back in India with the Army, he wrote her from Bangalore on 1 January 1899: “You will have an occupation and an interest in life which will make up for silly social amusements you will cease to shine in as time goes on and which will give you in the latter part of your life as fine a position in the world of taste & thought as formerly, & now in that of elegance & beauty. It is wise & philosophical. It may also be profitable. If you make £1000 a year out of it, I think that would be a lift in the dark clouds…”

Churchill was concerned, however, about his mother’s decision to charge a guinea per copy. “If you publish at a guinea (approximately six dollars in the United States) you must give people a guinea’s worth,” he said. “I don’t think it would be possible or fair to make more profit than 2/6 a number after everything was paid, otherwise your magazine would be supported only by charity, would run for a couple of numbers and then perish. It must hold its own by its own intrinsic value & excellence. Not by the favour of friends good enough to subscribe ‘It’s only a fiver, my dear,’” said Churchill.

Understanding his mother was determined to move ahead, Churchill helped her in making the initial contacts with publishers. He also offered much advice as to the style and format.
When Lady Randolph needed a name for her literary magazine, she asked friends for suggestions. Winston advised her: “I beg you not to be in a hurry; a bad name will damn any magazine.” He went on to say that she should search for a title that would be “exquisite, rich, stately...something classical and opulent.”4

Among the names suggested to Lady Randolph were International Quarterly and Arena. One of Lady Randolph’s former lovers, Sir Edgar Vincent, suggested Anglo-Saxon, and she was captivated by the name.

Winston did not like any of the names suggested to his mother, and the title he liked least was The Anglo-Saxon. “It means nothing & has not the slightest relation to the ideas and purposes of the magazine,”5 he told Jennie on 16 February 1899.

A week later, Churchill again told his mother that he did not like the title The Anglo-Saxon: “Most unsuit-able, it might do for a vy popular periodical meant to appeal to great masses on either side of the Atlantic. It is very inappropriate to a Magazine de Luxe, meant only for the cultivated few and with a distinct suspicion [of] cosmopolitanism about it.” Churchill suggested the title The Imperial Magazine, which “is less open to objection than the Anglo-Saxon, and is a sort of idea of excellence about it.”6

While travelling to Calcutta to consult with his former Head Master at Harrow, The Rev. J. E. C. Welldon, now Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, on the title of his mother’s journal, Churchill received more shocking news from her. Lady Randolph had now added a motto to the title: Blood is thicker than water. Churchill was horrified. From Calcutta, on 2 March 1899, Churchill wrote his mother an unflattering note on the subject:

I must now turn to the Magazine. I am vy glad that you will not publish until June. I repeat all I wrote a fortnight ago about there being no hurry. But I think you have quite lost the original idea of a magazine de luxe. Your title The Anglo-Saxon with its motto Blood is thicker than water only needs the Union Jack & the Star Spangled Banner crossed on the cover to be suited to one of Harmsworth’s cheap Imperialist productions….As for the motto Blood is thicker than water I thought that that had long ago been relegated to the pothouse Music Hall.7

Although Lady Randolph decided not to use the motto, she was firm on the title. When she learned, however, that someone else had registered the same title, Lady Randolph had a simple answer; she added the word “Review” and so used The Anglo-Saxon Review.

“It is...a go.”

With the literary quarterly now named, Churchill agreed to stop complaining about the title. After he returned home from the Army, Lady Randolph put him to work on the Review. Both worked on the introduction. It was the first literary collaboration of mother and son.

The preface, attributed to Lady Randolph, had Churchill’s literary style. It read in part: “...It is with such hopes that I send the first volume out into the world—an adventurous pioneer. Yet he bears a name which may sustain him even in the hardest of struggles, and of which he will at all times endeavour to be worthy—a name under which just laws, high purpose, civilizing influence, and a fine language have been spread to the remotest regions.”8

In June 1899, Volume I of Lady Randolph Churchill’s The Anglo-Saxon Review: A Quarterly Miscellany was published in London by John L. Lane. The miscellany included the work of the following American and British writers: Henry James, Cyril Davenport, Elizabeth Robins, Whitelaw Reid, Honorable Mrs. Boyle, the Earl of Rosebery, John Oliver Hobbes, Gilbert Parker, Algernon Swinburne, Prof. Oliver Lodge, Sir Rudolf Slatkin, and Frank Swetlenham.

London reviewers were divided on the literary merits of the new journal. The Daily Chronicle said: “Notwithstanding the gorgeous binding, it is nothing but a colorable imitation of The Yellow Book [a quarterly literary periodical priced at 5s. published in London from 1894 to 1897] with the same writers, the same make-up, and the same kind of contests.” The Times wrote: “Lady Randolph has planned her quarterly with daring and originality and has carried it out with remarkable success.”9

Across the Atlantic, The New York Times praised The Anglo-Saxon Review. The reviewer said in part: “And whoever has seen it has to own that it justifies by its appearance the ‘swagger’ announced in its price. It is a piece of bibliophily for which one can imagine collectors ten years from now violently competing with each other. A guinea a number in London, or six dollars in
New York, must seem a trifle ‘steep’ for a magazine. But mechanically, this magazine seems to justify its price. It is an extremely good piece of bookmaking...quite unique.” The reviewer acknowledged the well-known literary contributors and ended by saying, “It is, artistically and on its own merits, a go.”

**It Is Finished**

Future issues of *The Anglo-Saxon Review* included articles by American writers such as Stephen Crane, members of England’s nobility, officers of the Church of England, members of parliament, royalty, and foreign dignitaries. Interestingly, Volume VIII, published in March 1899, contained articles by both mother and son.

Lady Randolph’s article, “Decorative Domestic Art,” discussed the “remarkable” improvement in the furnishing and decorating of English houses during the previous twenty-five years—an improvement, she wrote, “would be difficult to find a parallel in the realm of art.”

Churchill’s article “British Cavalry” rebutted criticism of the cavalry during the fifteen months of mounted conflict in the Boer War. During that time, criticism had increased as the public learned of the losses of the Highland Brigade at Magersfontein, of the Dublin Fusiliers at Colenso, and the Inniskilling Fusiliers in the battle of Pieters.

As with the first issue, subsequent editions of *The Anglo-Saxon Review* were individually decorated in a detailed pattern of gilt decorative work on a leather cover. The subscription list included heads of state, royalty, and some of the wealthiest families in Britain and the United States. Each issue also contained beautiful portraits of famous people such as George Washington and Queen Victoria.
Eventually, the publishing costs, high price of the magazine, and less-than-anticipated subscriptions affected the quarterly’s success, and Lady Randolph’s journal had a short life. Only ten volumes were published from June 1899 to September 1901.

Despite *The Anglo-Saxon Review*’s lack of ultimate success, Lady Randolph’s bold effort as editor and head of a quarterly miscellany must be applauded. Her vision, hard work, and dealings with the literary notables of America and England were a novelty for a woman. Churchill’s support and commitment to his mother’s dream were admirable, despite it being a challenging business endeavor from the onset. Lady Randolph and Winston working together on the quarterly miscellany was a splendid collaboration, one remembered in the annals of the Churchill family.

Fred Glueckstein is the author of *Churchill and Colonist II* (2015).

Endnotes
3. Ibid., p. 434.
6. Ibid., p. 433.
10. Ibid.
Note: All sums of money earned by Winston Churchill from film are given in the currency (£) and amount paid to him at the time. To convert these to an approximate equivalent today, multiply by the following factors: 1930s–£ x60, $ x80; 1940s–£ x40, $ x55; 1960s–£ x20, $ x27.

Winston Churchill and the film industry grew up together. As a schoolboy, Churchill witnessed the demonstration of an early projector; full-length films first appeared in cinemas as he entered government in 1906; and an early Pathé newsreel captured him as home secretary in 1911 at the siege of Sidney Street in London.

Churchill first took a close interest in the new industry in 1929, when his friend Bernard Baruch included the Los Angeles suburb of Hollywood in the itinerary for Churchill’s two-month American tour of 1929. US film-makers had by then pulled so far ahead of their European counterparts that Hollywood was producing four out of every five of the world’s films.

The newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst acted as Churchill’s host in California. After a few days with the official Mrs. Hearst in San Francisco, the party moved south to the domain of Hearst’s unofficial partner, the film star Marion Davies. Her party for Churchill was attended by Hollywood’s social élite, including Charlie Chaplin, who invited his fellow Englishman to witness the filming of City Lights. Churchill may have returned to Britain financially poorer after losing money in the Wall Street crash, but his memories of Hollywood were vivid enough to inspire a newspaper article entitled ‘The Peter Pan Township of the Films.’

New technology was part of what drew Churchill to film; but he also loved its sense of adventure, its creativity and its lavishness. From the outset he harboured hopes that the new medium might one day reward his creativity more richly than writing books.

Alexander Korda

Churchill waited several years before the first sign that he might be right. One drawback was that neither he nor his agents could easily cultivate contacts while they were so far away in Hollywood, but that was to change in February 1934 when his son Randolph introduced him to a young Hungarian film producer, Alexander Korda. Korda had just made the move from Hollywood back to Europe. He would guide Churchill through the film world for the next two decades.

Korda had led Hungary’s film industry in 1918 before moving to Vienna, Berlin, and then Paris. A string of successes took him eight years later to Hollywood, where he directed under contract to a studio. He chafed, however, under the rigidities of the studio system, so he returned to Paris in 1930 determined to lead a European film renaissance.

In 1931 Paramount Pictures asked Korda to produce its first British film, and its success persuaded him to launch his own company, London Film Productions. His breakthrough came two years later when the actor Charles Laughton agreed to take the title role of The Private Life of Henry VIII. The film’s success made Korda the toast of European film-makers.

He was still riding the crest of this wave when introduced to Churchill, who was twenty years his senior. In other respects the two men were well-matched: both had an eye for the grand vision, both enjoyed taking risks, and both liked to live extravagantly. Korda was immediately alive to the publicity value of recruiting Churchill and offered him a contract as “editor” and “associate producer” of a series of short films, which were to be about “topical issues” such as the future of the monarchy. Churchill proposed for himself a monthly salary of £400 plus a 25% share of profits; Korda did not bother to quibble.

Churchill’s first pay-check from London Film reached his bank account in April 1934, and checks continued to flow throughout the summer, although he was not required to do any work. Once he had finished writing the second volume of Marlborough in August, he was keen to get going. Korda set a production date in September for early in 1935, only to change his
mind two days later. He now planned a film to mark King George V’s silver jubilee in 1935 and offered Churchill an extra fee of £10,000 (plus profit share) to produce its screenplay. Churchill immediately accepted, pledging to “sidetrack” all his other work.4

Korda’s largesse may well have sprung from his confidence that he was about to sign an important funding agreement with the leading British insurance company, Prudential Assurance. Korda’s biographer Charles Drazin suggests that the investment was brokered by Colonel Claude Dansey, a member of Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service, who had been tasked with forming a new intelligence agency to investigate the rise of Fascism. According to Drazin, Dansey offered to arrange funding for London Film in return for cover for his agents in the company’s new European offices.5

Whatever the origins of his offer, Korda adjudged Churchill’s first draft of the screenplay “splendid” and arranged a trial at Chartwell of RCA’s latest “home cinema” equipment. There was never any serious prospect that Churchill would be able to afford the hefty price tag, but the Chartwell staff all enjoyed two nights of private viewing.

Churchill’s Favorite Film

It was to prove a temporary high point of Churchill’s dalliance with film. Before the year’s end, Korda’s new “financial friends” forced him to renegotiate Churchill’s deal; then in January 1935 the jubilee film collapsed under the weight of government obstruction. Churchill was left to negotiate a generous compensation package with Korda, who promised £7,000 (more than half of it tax-free).6

Nevertheless Churchill’s more extravagant hopes for the film’s future contribution to his purse had been disappointed. He received only one more approach before the war, when Korda asked in 1937 whether he would be “historical consultant” to a film about the life of T. E. Lawrence. Churchill proposed a fee of £2,000 for a month’s work, unaware that a series of box office
flops had weakened Korda’s empire. The film-maker’s counter-offer of just £250 sent Churchill back to his books, where he remained until war broke out.\textsuperscript{7}

Korda returned to Hollywood within a month of Churchill’s appointment as Britain’s prime minister in May 1940. The move won Korda few friends in London, but it was part and parcel of his secret activities, according to his biographer Drazin. His hidden task, approved by Churchill, was to make films that fell short of overt propaganda, yet nudged American opinion towards war. Ostensibly *That Hamilton Woman* told the story of Admiral Horatio Nelson’s relationship with Lady Hamilton, but its sub-text was of heroic British resistance to the last would-be dictator of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte.\textsuperscript{8}

**Hollywood to the Rescue**

Korda lost no time in rekindling his links with the heads of Hollywood’s studios, some of whom began to take an interest in Churchill’s back story when it became clear in 1941 that he had seen off Hitler’s threat to invade Britain. Warner Brothers moved first, enlisting Korda’s help to front their bid for the film rights to *My Early Life*, Churchill’s early autobiography. Brendan Bracken handled the negotiations for Churchill; although a publisher relatively unversed in film, he raised the final price to £7,500.\textsuperscript{9}

Two years later, the decisive turn of the military tide in favour of the Allies prompted another bid. This time Korda (now knighted as Sir Alexander) returned in partnership with MGM to bid for the film rights to Churchill’s biography of his ancestor, the 1st Duke of Marlborough.\textsuperscript{10} Churchill was about to accept a raised offer of £20,000 when his staff suggested checking the tax position with his bank. By happy coincidence the manager knew another bank customer who was a film producer. Felippo del Guidice, or Mr Del as the British press called the immigrant from Italy, had worked for Korda, then set up a rival business backed by J. Arthur Rank. On his return from the Quebec Conference in September 1943, Churchill invited “best bids,” and Mr Del left nothing to chance, raising his offer to £50,000. Churchill immediately accepted.\textsuperscript{11}

Bracken consoled Korda by offering the rights to *History of The English-Speaking Peoples* at the same price, suggesting it could yield multiple films. Korda and MGM were about to sign when lawyers suggested that the film rights might have passed with the book to publishers Cassell and Company in 1932: the two sets of rights had seldom then been separated.\textsuperscript{12} Dismayed, Churchill refused to pay cash to buy them back, preferring to offer Cassell a swap with the rights to the British version of his war memoirs, if he wrote them.

Three sets of British publishers now thought that they had a valid claim to Churchill’s war memoirs. His lawyers insisted that he must disentangle this legal thicket before signing any deal for *History*’s film rights, even if he was busy planning the summer invasion of France.

It took until September 1944 before the last of the publishers fell into line; and another six months of negotiations before Korda paid £50,000 for the rights in March 1945.\textsuperscript{13} As the war drew to a close, Korda added £35,000 for the rights to *The River War*; the following year he returned with £25,000 for *Savrola* (Churchill’s only novel); and finally he paid £10,000 for *My African Journey*.\textsuperscript{14}

Churchill had started the war in debt; yet Korda and del Guidice transformed his fortunes during the war and its aftermath by paying him £177,500 for film rights to his pre-war books. Churchill was officially retired as an author at the time, so he paid no tax on any of the money.\textsuperscript{15}

**Cinematic Disappointments**

He took up writing again in 1947 to complete *The Second World War*, meanwhile confining his enthusiasm for the cinema to regular private showings at Chartwell of war films. Only when he finally retired from politics in 1955 did he once more entertain approaches for new film projects. Two leading American networks, NBC and CBS, offered large sums
for exclusive interviews, but Churchill preferred to deal once more with his old friend Korda.

So late in 1955 he asked Korda’s help in selling the television rights of his History of the English-Speaking Peoples to the Ford Foundation, which was interested in their sponsorship. Korda politely inquired whether he had not already bought the rights in 1945, prompting Churchill’s advisers to save face by suggesting a joint venture. Already ill, Korda played along, but his death in March 1956 caused Ford to lose interest.

Finally deprived of his film mentor, Churchill had to fall back on the advice of his private secretary Anthony Montague Browne and his solicitor Anthony Moir, both of whom were new to the industry. Two months later, their inexprience told when in May 1956 MGM made a handsome offer for the film rights to My Early Life. They were on the point of signing when a check revealed that Churchill had sold the rights to Warner Brothers fifteen years earlier. His new team took eighteen months to buy the rights back and, by then, a new regime was in charge at MGM. First the studio cut Churchill’s terms, then in 1959 it pulled out altogether.

Lights, Camera, Churchill!

Nothing at the time seemed to be working on the film front. My Early Life had hit the buffers; A History of the English-Speaking Peoples was proving un-marketable; and Churchill personally vetoed a promising approach for rights to The Second World War. Its would-be producer, Jack le Vien, had met Churchill while serving as an American press attaché in the war. After the war he worked at Pathé and now proposed to use old newsreel footage for his version of The Second World War: the device would neatly sidestep Churchill’s need to record any fresh material and so avoid any liability to tax. Ed Murrow, wartime broadcaster for CBS in London, had killed the scheme by giving Churchill a bad reference for le Vien, but Montague Browne and Moir were gradually gaining confidence. Late in 1959 Montague Browne visited New York to make up his own mind and judged le Vien’s project to be sound. The American went on to produce two successful films for television, The Valiant Years and Their Finest Hours, before basing a third and last on Churchill’s book Painting as a Pastime.

My Early Life took longer to come home. Paramount took over the baton from MGM in 1960. They found just as much trouble, however, in commissioning a screenplay which both the studio and Churchill’s advisers could approve. In May 1962 Paramount handed on to Columbia, and at last an angle was found: the screenplay would concentrate on Churchill’s troubled early relationship with his father. Late in 1963 Montague Browne finally flew home from New York clutching a check for £100,000, Churchill’s largest ever. Only one of the seven sets of film rights to pre-war books ever made it onto the silver screen. Churchill never saw it: Young Winston appeared in 1972, seven years after his death.

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Endnotes
4. WSC confirmatory letter to Alexander Korda, 23 September 1934, CHAR 8/495/64–5, CAC.
7. Letters between D. Cunynghame and WSC, 20–22 October 1937, CHAR 8/557/2, 3, 4, CAC.
8. Drazin, Korda, Britain’s only Movie Mogul, p. 220 et seq.
10. KH note, 27 July 1943, CHAR 8/709/3, CAC.
11. KH note, 19 September 1943, CHAR 8/709/16, CAC. £30,000 was to be paid immediately and the balance of £20,000 nine months later.
12. KH note, 28 January 1944; memo to WSC, CHAR 8/713/3, 1; KH letter to C. Nicholl, 8 February 1944, CHAR 8/713/4, CAC.
13. KH note to WSC, 14 March 1945; C. Nicholl letter to WSC, 26 March 1945; KH note, 6 April 1945, CHAR 8/720/10, 11, 14, CAC.
14. Lloyds Bank letter and statements, 2 August 1946, 12 August 1948, CHUR 1/11/87, 1/1/58, CAC.
The concept of the British stiff upper lip was invented by the Victorians, and was especially prevalent in the upper classes, where it was considered *infra dig* to show one’s emotions openly. It was widely believed that the British Empire itself depended on the capacity of officers and gentlemen to rise above their natural human emotions and stay calm and collected, regardless of whatever appalling thing was happening. The very centre of that British belief-system was to be found in the British Army.

In earlier periods tearfulness did not imply a lack of manliness or self-control. At Admiral Horatio Nelson’s funeral in January 1806, for example, every single one of the eight admirals who carried the coffin down the Nave of St Paul’s Cathedral was in tears, as were at least half of the all-male congregation. Regency men were not expected to have to control their emotions in the way that their Victorian grandsons and great-grandsons were.

Yet there was one Victorian upper-class British Army officer and gentleman who cried in public to such an extraordinary extent that it was remarked upon on so many occasions that we need to regard him instead as a Regency figure born out of his time. Winston Churchill was a man of such powerful emotions, with a profoundly romantic imagination and capacity for empathy, and also possessing such aristocratic disregard of what others thought of him, that if he felt like crying, he just did. Such was his historical imagination too that this astonishing lachrymosity could be unleashed at minor moments as well as on great occasions, especially if martial music was involved.

Churchill’s last private secretary, Sir Anthony Montague Browne, once listed some of the things that trig-

Winston Wept: The Extraordinary Lachrymosity and Romantic Imagination of Winston Churchill

By Andrew Roberts
gered tears from his boss. These included everything from tales of heroism to a noble dog struggling through the snow to his master.

When it came to blood, toil, tears and sweat, Churchill knew about them all, especially tears. So here are a few occasions, taken chronologically, in which Churchill was recorded as crying.

**The Record**

On 30 September 1897, after his great friend Lieutenant William Browne-Clayton was killed close to him on an expedition along India's Northwest Frontier, Churchill wrote to his mother, “I rarely detect genuine emotion in myself,” and “I must rank it as a rare instance the fact that I cried when I saw poor Browne-Clayton literally cut to pieces on a stretcher.”

In 1921 when his faithful manservant Thomas Walden died, who had worked for his father before him, Churchill wrote to Clementine after the funeral: “Alas my dearest I grieve to have lost this humble friend devoted and true and whom I have known since I was a youth....” Few other aristocrats of the day would have described his manservant as a friend.

Naturally he cried for his other friends. On the death of F. E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead, in 1930, “Last night Winston wept for his friend,” Clementine wrote to Birkenhead’s widow Margaret. “He said several times ‘I feel so lonely.’” Other aristocrats of his day would have described his tears at T. E. Lawrence’s funeral in 1935.

The day after his abdication, the former Edward VIII had lunch with Churchill on 11 December 1936 and noticed how affected his guest was: “As I saw Mr Churchill off, there were tears in his eyes. I can still see him standing at the door; his hat in one hand, stick in the other. Something must have stirred in his mind; tapping out the solemn measure with his walking stock, he began to recite, as if to himself: ‘He nothing common did or mean / Upon that memorable scene.’ His resonant voice seemed to give especial poignancy to those lines from the ode by Andrew Marvell on the beheading of Charles I.”

**The War**

On 13 May 1940, three days after Churchill became Prime Minister and coincidentally the same day as his “blood, toil, tears, and sweat” speech, Harold Nicolson recorded that Lloyd George made “a moving speech telling Winston how fond he is of him. Winston cries slightly and mops his eyes.” Lloyd George’s private secretary A. J. Sylvester recorded how “Winston’s eyes filled with tears, he buried his head quickly in his left hand and wiped his face.”

On 4 July 1940 Churchill cried after the House of Commons applauded his decision to sink the French fleet at Oran. “When Churchill finished his speech and sank into his seat,” recorded the Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky, “the whole House, irrespective of party affiliation, jumped to its feet and applauded the prime minister for several minutes—a loud, powerful and unanimous ovation. Sitting on the Treasury bench, the tension draining from his body, Churchill lowered his head and the tears ran down his cheeks.” It was a strong, stirring scene. “At last we have a real leader!” was the cry echoing through the lobbies. Churchill’s private secretary John Colville recorded of that occasion, “Winston left the House visibly affected. I heard him say to [Leslie] Hore-Belisha ‘This is heartbreaking for me.’”

Visiting an air-raid shelter where forty people had been killed in the East End of London after the first big raid of the Blitz on 8 September 1940, Churchill, in the words of a letter from Pug Ismay, “broke down completely” at his welcome. “You see, he really cares,” a woman called out, “he’s crying.” Two months later Chips Channon noted that at Neville Chamberlain’s funeral: “Winston had the decency to cry as he stood by the coffin.”

In January 1941, Harry Hopkins recited, “Whither thou goest, I will go.” One of those present, Ambassador Gil Winant, wrote in his memoirs how “It was hard for Mr Churchill to recall this incident without being overcome with emotion.” The next month Lady Diana Cooper wrote to her son from Ditchley to say “We had two lovely films after dinner—one was called Escape and the other was a very light comedy called Quiet Wedding. There were also several short reels from Papa’s Ministry. Winston managed to cry through all of them, including the comedy.”

In April 1941 Elizabeth Nel joined the Number 10 typing team, taking dictation from the PM. “Sometimes his voice would become thick with emotion,” she recalled, “and occasionally a tear would run down his cheek.” The next month he cried when visiting the destroyed chamber of the House of Commons, and did not attempt to wipe away the tears. When in June
1941 Colonel Georges Groussard, Pétain’s spy chief, met Churchill in London, his account of the sufferings of Occupied France “reduced Churchill to tears.” Alec Cadogan, the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, noticed the PM crying while watching That Hamilton Woman after dinner that August.

That same year on 10 August, while singing “O God Our Help in Ages Past” on USS Augusta with Franklin Roosevelt in Newfoundland, a journalist present noticed how “Churchill was affected emotionally, as I knew he would be. His handkerchief stole from his pocket.” That November Clement Attlee wrote to his brother Tom about the effect that the bombing of cities had upon Churchill personally. In particular he wrote of the prime minister’s “extreme sensitiveness to suffering. I remember some years ago his eyes filling up with tears when he talked of the sufferings of the Jews in Germany while I recall the tones in which looking at Blitzed houses he said ‘poor poor little homes.’ It is a side of his character not always appreciated.”

The fact that so many people mentioned it shows how unusual it was for statesmen to cry in public. He also cried before the troops, including during the Eighth Army march past after the battle of El Alamein and again in Tripoli in February 1943 during the march-past of the 51st Division. When Admiral Cunningham took the PM to visit the submarine crews in Algiers harbour in June, Churchill made a “delightful speech” and came away with tears running down his cheeks.

That November, during the Cairo Conference, one day after lunch with the president, Churchill asked his daughter Sarah to arrange for a car to go to the Pyramids to see if it could get close enough to take FDR there. When it was found possible to get quite close, “My father bounded into the room and said: ‘Mr President, you simply must come to see the Sphinx and the Pyramids. I’ve arranged it all.’ When FDR tried to lean forward on the arms and about to rise—only to sink back again—Churchill turned abruptly away saying, ‘We’ll wait for you in the car.’” Outside in the shimmering sunshine, Sarah “saw that his eyes were bright with tears. ‘I love that man,’ he said simply.”

New Year 1944 saw Churchill in Marrakesh, seriously ill with pneumonia. On 18 January, he made an unexpected return to the House of Commons. “He was flushed with pleasure and emotion,” recorded the MP and diarist Harold Nicolson, “and hardly had he sat down when two large tears began to trickle down his cheeks. He mopped at them clumsily with a huge white handkerchief.”

Naturally Churchill cried in April 1945 at FDR’s memorial service in St. Paul’s, and also when he visited FDR’s grave after the war. Three months later, the Prime Minister’s secretaries, Patrick Kinna and Elizabeth Layton, sat crying with him when the results of the 1945 election came through.

Post War

When on returning to office in 1951 Churchill learnt that the Canadian government had decided that “Rule, Britannia!” should no longer be played by the Royal Canadian Air Force or Navy, he had his defence minister Lord Ismay complain to the Canadian prime minister, Mr. St. Laurent. He almost decided that he would cancel his visit to Ottawa in January 1952 over the matter. He was persuaded not to by Clementine, and when he disembarked from the sleeper in Ottawa at the station opposite the Chateau Laurier the RCAF band struck up “Rule, Britannia!” and Churchill wept. From then on, in Colville’s words, “nobody ever dared to utter even the mildest criticism of Mr. St Laurent or of Canada.”

The death of King George VI had the effect you would by now have expected. “When I went to the Prime Minister’s bedroom he was sitting alone with tears in his eyes,” wrote Colville, “looking straight in front of him and reading neither his official papers nor his newspapers. I had not realised how much the King
“When I went to the Prime Minister’s bedroom, he was sitting alone with tears in his eyes” —Sir John Colville

had meant to him. I tried to cheer him up by saying how well he would get on with the new Queen, but all he could say was that he did not know her and she was only a child.” He nonetheless went down to Heathrow to meet the new Queen, and took his secretary Jane Portal to whom he was dictating in the car; she recalled “He was in a flood of tears.” Portal’s son Justin Welby, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, remembers seeing Churchill in tears when visiting Number 10 as a boy.

In January 1958 Churchill rang Ava Waverley to console her on the death of her second husband, John Anderson, and ended by shedding tears when discussing her first husband Ralph Wigram. That August, Brendan Bracken died of oesophageal cancer. Upon hearing the news, Churchill wept, saying “poor, dear Brendan.”

Moral Courage

In that letter about the death of his brother officer Browne-Clayton in 1897, Churchill had told his mother “I think a keen sense of necessity or of burning wrong or injustice would make me sincere, but I rarely detect genuine emotion in myself.” All too often, this has been taken at face value, but I believe that we can now safely discard it. In fact if anything the opposite was true. Plenty of people cry at weddings and funerals. Churchill cried not only at those but also at resignations, appointments, movies (even comedies), the Blitz, great parliamentary occasions, the Holocaust, military parades and march-pasts, and old songs.

Churchill had the moral courage necessary to cry when all around his my contemporaries were keeping stiff upper lips. He was if anything a slave to his emotions, and these emotions were fine and honourable ones. The decision to fight on against the Germans in 1940 was primarily an emotional rather than a rational one, so we can all be thankful that Winston Churchill wore his heart on his sleeve in the truly extraordinary way that he did.

Andrew Roberts is the author of many books, including, most recently, the major new biography Napoleon. His next book will be a full-scale biography of Churchill. This article is adapted from his speech to the 33rd International Churchill Conference in Washington, D.C., 29 October 2016

Endnotes

14. Elizabeth Nel, Mr Churchill’s Secretary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p. 36.
Every day, as I sit in the Speaker’s Chair in the Chamber of the House of Commons, I am acutely aware of the enduring consequences of one of Winston Churchill’s lesser-known “big decisions.”

In the late 1940s plans were being drawn up to rebuild the House of Commons, which had been so badly damaged during the War. The planners considered the basic facts. There were just over 600 MPs at that time, so they produced drawings for a Chamber that would seat 600 people.

Churchill challenged this. He insisted that the Chamber should be rebuilt to approximately the same size as it had previously been—to seat about 400 people.

Churchill adored the Commons Chamber. It was the forum in which he delivered his greatest speeches. It was his natural habitat. It was his home. He understood it. He knew instinctively how it worked. He had a feel for it that eluded others.

So he insisted that the essential element of the Chamber must be paramount. That essential element was not the comfort of MPs. It was the immediacy and the intimacy of the Chamber’s proceedings. There was no need, Churchill argued, to build a larger Chamber to seat 600 people comfortably. It was far more important to create a debating forum in which everyone who spoke, wherever they stood, could see, hear and communicate with everyone else in the Chamber.

He also insisted that the shape of the Chamber should continue to be two sets of benches opposite each other, rather than the fashionable hemisphere. Confrontation is not something to be avoided. It is the very core of democratic activity.

He was right, of course. And he got his way. Every new MP, and every visitor to the Chamber, is surprised by how small it is. And they are often perturbed by the fact that on important occasion, when every MP wants to be present, there is not enough space for all of us to sit down. It is true that it can sometimes be a bit of a squash. Tardy or busy MPs who have not arrived early to claim their place then have to stand in the aisles, sit on the steps or retreat to the gallery.

But what a distinctive atmosphere that creates. When the Chamber is crowded, it has a particular excitement that cannot be matched. When there is a quiet debate with fewer Members present, the fact that they can see each other and speak in gentler tones makes it easier to reach a consensus.

Leadership This Day

“Leadership This Day” illustrates how Winston Churchill’s example guides and motivates today’s leaders. Contributors come from many fields, including business, politics, and the military.

By Eleanor Laing
I smile sometimes when I wonder, as I sur-
vey the Chamber from the Chair, what Win-
ston would have thought about parliament
being televised, about the bright lights and
the microphones, which now intrude into
his precious Chamber. I think, however, that
he would still have been satisfied by what he
achieved in preserving its traditional form. As
he said, in the House in 1942, “Thus we ar-
rive, by our ancient constitutional methods, at
practical working arrangements which show
that Parliamentary democracy can adapt itself
to all situations and can go out in all weathers.”
He was not actually talking about the Cham-
ber, but I like to think that, if he looked at us
today, he would consider what he said then—
and he would agree with himself!

So we have yet another manifestation of the
important consequences of Churchill’s lead-
ership qualities. Leadership is not just about
strength and power. Surely it is also about hav-
ing the courage of your convictions, trusting
your instincts, and having confidence in the
lessons gained from your own experience.

We remain in awed admiration of how
Churchill stood up to the wickedness of tyran-
nym and evil dictatorship. Let us remember also
how he stood up to those who pay attention
only to numbers. Every Member of the House
of Commons should be eternally grateful that
Winston’s wisdom, determination, and leader-
ship has given us the unique Chamber which
continues to be at the very heart of our de-
mocracy.

The Rt. Hon. Eleanor Laing is the Member
of Parliament for Epping Forest, which includes
much of what was Sir Winston Churchill’s con-
stituency for forty years. In 2013 she was elected
Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.
Lady Randolph had written Lord Randolph in late July that Winston “has improved very much in looks.” She wrote to him again on 25 September that “on the whole he has been a very good boy—but honestly he is getting to be too old for a woman to manage and he really requires to be with a man…He is just at the ‘ugly’ stage—slouchy and tiresome.” In the first volume of the Official Biography of his father, Randolph Churchill wrote of his grandmother that “Unless Winston’s looks greatly fluctuated, it would seem that Lady Randolph was somewhat capricious in her judgment for only two months earlier she had written that he had improved very much in looks.”

His mother’s “ugly” comment, however, was not directed toward her son’s looks. Rather, it was directed at Winston’s manners and maturity, especially towards his mother. That “ugliness” of which she wrote was in full bloom as he reached his seventeenth birthday. The occasion for such a prolonged display of “ugliness” was the desire of Harrow’s Head Master that Winston stay the Christmas holidays with a French family so as to improve his French in preparation for the Sandhurst exams. In this, the Head Master was simply carrying out Lord Randolph’s desire that everything be done at Harrow to ensure that Winston made it into Sandhurst.

Winston knew he had to go to France over the holidays, but he was determined to do so on his own terms and timetable and said so in a remarkable string of ill-tempered letters to his mother. He won this battle as his mother persuaded the Head Master to change from the French family in Rouen, with whom original arrangements had been made, to the home of a Harrow French master in Versailles. Having prevailed on his terms, Winston now set to work on his own timetable. The Head Master wanted him to go immediately after the term ended. Winston wanted to spend Christmas at home, and his efforts to persuade his mother to do so are indeed “ugly.”

Lady Randolph wrote back that “the tone of your letter is not calculated to make one over lenient. When one wants something in this world, it is not by delivering ultimatums that one is likely to get it...Meanwhile I will think it over...but I tell you frankly that I am going to decide, not you.” Winston was not dissuaded.

Winston soon learned that his mother was indeed angry with him, for she wrote on 15 December that “I have only read one page of yr letter and I send it back to you as its style does not please me...My dear, you won’t gain anything by taking this line.” Perhaps, but that didn’t stop Winston from trying.

In the event, Lady Randolph prevailed and Winston did not. Still, it is instructive to learn that the future savior of Western Civilization was once a typical teenager challenging and trying his parents.

Churchill’s first sojourn in the political wilderness continued throughout the autumn of 1916, but his expectations that the Dardanelles Commission would restore his political reputation coupled with the fall of Asquith as Prime Minister would bring him back to the corridors of power were not fulfilled. It would be mid-July 1917 before he once more returned to the Cabinet.

On 28 September, Churchill finally appeared in person to testify before the Dardanelles Commission in support of the vast amount of evidence he had provided to them. He read his statement and submitted to questions from the Commission in support of what he believed were five undeniable conclusions: first, the War Cabinet gave full authority to everything done at the Darnanelles; second, there was a reasonable prospect of success; third, greater interests in the war were not compromised; fourth, all possible care and forethought were exercised in the preparation for the naval operations and subsequent military landings; fifth, vigor and determination were shown in the execution of the overall plan. In the event, however, the commission never published any of the numerous documents he had submitted or his prepared statement and answers to cross-examination by the commission members.
On 5 December, Churchill's hopes for a return to power soared in the early evening, only to be dashed by evening's end. Earlier that day, David Lloyd George, Andrew Bonar Law, Lord Curzon, Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Robert Cecil resigned from the Cabinet. Realizing it meant the end of his government, Asquith tendered his own resignation to the King at 7 pm. By 9:30, the King had asked Bonar Law to form a new government.

Meanwhile, Churchill and his friends F. E. Smith and Max Aitken (later Lords Birkenhead and Beaverbrook respectively) were at the Turkish Bath of the Royal Automobile Club when Smith telephoned Lloyd George to remind him of their dinner engagement that night. He mentioned that Churchill was with him and Lloyd George promptly asked that he be invited as well. At the dinner, all four men talked of nothing but who would be in the next government, in Aitken's words, “on terms of equality.” When Lloyd George left the dinner party to meet Bonar Law, he asked Aitken to accompany him. On the way, Aitken wrote, Lloyd George told him Churchill was “too confident” of high office in the new cabinet and asked him upon his return to the dinner party “to convey a hint” that enormous pressure was being brought to exclude Churchill from the new government.

Lloyd George had been correct that Churchill was confident of high office in the new regime after spending the entire evening discussing with people he considered his friends just who would be best suited for which posts. When Aitken delivered his “hint,” Churchill understood the message at once. “He felt he had been duped…and he blazed into righteous anger,” according to Aitken, and “with that…walked out into the street.”

Churchill obviously thought he was being treated unfairly, and perhaps he was—but why? Martin Gilbert offers an explanation at the conclusion of Volume III of the Official Biography (pp. 823–26):

Clementine Churchill realized why he did not inspire trust. She saw how far his strident confidence frightened those with whom he worked and with whom he had to look for support. She alone of those closest to him told him of his faults; others, like Asquith and Lloyd George, added to his self-deception by frequent praise and encouragement when they were with him, but by severe censure of him in their private talk and correspondence. Clementine Churchill cautioned him directly. In her letters to him, she stressed the danger to his career of the impatience and scorn which he often showed towards those who disagreed with him....She warned him that these weaknesses of character were accentuated by his often brusque and dictatorial manner and by his overriding impatience. She saw clearly that the ideas which he produced with such extraordinary energy and conviction were seen by others as lacking in judgment; and that the more fiercely he pressed forward with a course of action, the more lacking in perspective he appeared to those colleagues without whose support he could not act.

75 YEARS AGO
Autumn 1941 • Age 67
“He is a loveable person in spite of his impatience”

The impatience, which his wife observed in the middle-aged Churchill, may have mellowed since his younger days, but it was still there. On 12 October, one of his secretaries, Elizabeth Layton, wrote to her parents that he was “not in a very good temper this morning” and recounted his “roar of rage” when she mistook “right” for “ripe” even though she had initially read the phrase back to him as “right,” and, Miss Layton wrote, “he had not mentioned to her that ‘right’ was ‘wrong’.” Still, she wrote, “I can’t help feeling rather fond of him—he is a loveable person, in spite of his impatience.”

By the end of November, things were looking up for Churchill and Great Britain. The Russians were keeping the German Army at bay, some fifty miles west of Moscow; the United States had amended the Neutrality Act to allow its merchant ships to be armed; and General Sir Alan Brooke had agreed to become Chief of the Imperial General Staff. What Brooke wrote in his diary about accepting the position illustrates how Churchill had indeed mellowed somewhat but not entirely: “I am fully aware that my path will not be strewn with rose petals. But I have the greatest respect and real affection for him, so that I hope to be able to stand the storms of abuse which I may well have to bear frequently.”

On 29 November the siege of Tobruk was lifted, and the Japanese Navy bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December. The next day Churchill made plans to leave for the United States on 10 December, but FDR put him off. He could not possibly see Churchill for at least a month. Thanks, however, to the baffling decision by Adolf Hitler on 11 December to declare war on the United States without seeking a quid pro quo declaration of war by Japan against the Soviet Union, Churchill’s understandable disappointment at being kept at arms length by Roosevelt did not last. After Germany declared war, the President’s schedule magically cleared up, and Churchill sailed for America in heavy seas on 12 December.
When the young Winston Churchill set off to cover the Boer War as a newspaper correspondent in 1899, his overriding ambition was to make a name for himself. Aged just twenty-four, Churchill had already risked life and limb on two previous occasions in his bid to win public acclaim serving as an officer with the British Army in India and Sudan. But it was not until he travelled to South Africa as a war correspondent for London’s Morning Post that his heroic exploits succeeded in making him a household name. And it was as a direct result of this experience that his was able to fulfil his ultimate ambition—to win election as a Member of Parliament.

The three-year conflict between Britain and the Boers was brutal and bloody, with heavy casualties suffered on both sides. But, as Candice Millard explains in her well-researched and highly-readable account of Churchill’s exploits in South Africa, Hero of the Empire: The Boer War, a Daring Escape, and the Making of Winston Churchill, young Winston could not wait to get to the centre of the action.

But Churchill’s high hopes for his assignment were thwarted soon after he arrived in South Africa when he suffered the indignity of being captured and taken into captivity. This major setback occurred when the armoured train Churchill was travelling on suddenly came under attack by a well-organised group of Boer guerrillas. After the train was brought to a shuddering halt, Churchill displayed enormous bravery in his efforts to rally the British force to defend their positions.

His heroic efforts, though, were in vain, as it soon became clear the beleaguered British group was no match for the superior Boer force, and—to Churchill’s horror—the white flags of surrender began to appear among the British positions. As Millard explains, Churchill had already complained bitterly about the willingness of the British to lay down arms, writing to a friend that “there has been a great deal too much surrendering in this war.” Yet when Churchill found himself unarmed and surrounded by the Boers, he had no option but to follow the others into captivity.

Millard relates how Churchill was deeply depressed by the experience, believing he had “cut myself out of the whole of this exciting war with all its boundless possibilities of adventure and advancement.” And after he and the other prisoners had been taken to a makeshift camp in Pretoria, he resolved to make good his escape, which he accomplished by climbing through a lavatory window and then scrambling over the perimeter fence. Once free, he then hitched a ride on a coal train and, with the help of pro-British sympathisers, made his way to friendly territory on the coast.

While it may not have been the kind of experience he had anticipated when he first arrived in South Africa, the story of Churchill’s capture and escape from the Boers catapulted him into the public eye and made him a household name. And it was as a direct result of his daring-do in South Africa that Churchill was able to achieve his lifetime ambition of being elected to parliament when, the following year, he was
elected MP for the northern seat of Oldham. A legend was born. 

Con Coughlin is the author of Churchill’s First War (2013).

**Double Indemnity**


**Review by Peter Clarke**

Winston Churchill, like many old men, very much enjoyed the sound of his own voice. Unlike most of them, he still had some important things to say at seventy-one, his age in 1946 when he delivered two famous speeches: one in February at Fulton, Missouri, and the other in Zurich, Switzerland, in September of the same year. He had recently been voted out of power in Britain but was probably the most famous person in the world at the time and was now free to accept invitations to countries less afflicted than Britain by postwar privations. The Fulton speech was titled “The Sinews of Peace” but is often hailed as recognizing the beginning of a cold war that was to polarize the world for most of the next half-century. It is remembered in particular for its graphic comment on the state of Europe: “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.” The Zurich speech projected a more optimistic view, but one equally striking, in saying that “we must re-create the European family in a regional structure called, it may be, the United States of Europe.”

One of the most telling points that Lord Watson’s own punctilious scrutiny of many of the original documents in the Churchill Archives brings out is the difference between the nuanced phrases that Churchill actually used and the inevitably cruder headlines that were generated. Moreover, each speech had to stand the test of time. The Fulton speech, once thought so provocative and alarming, came to be seen as a sobering assessment of the impact of Soviet ambitions in remaking the postwar world. The Zurich speech has likewise been selectively mined over the years, especially by those who wish to claim Churchill as one of the founding fathers of the subsequent European Union. Yet Watson is surely right to insist that its central message about “the European family” did not commit Britain to direct participation. “I am now going to say something that will astonish you,” is how Churchill, the well-practised orator, led up to his most challenging proposal: “The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany” (118). And the role of his own country? As at Fulton, so in Zurich, he voiced the further aspiration for “the British Commonwealth of Nations” (as it was known in those days) to achieve a “special relationship” with the United States (72). This little book will be welcomed by anyone who wants to understand what Churchill really said in staking his claim to continuing influence in the postwar world.

Peter Clarke’s new book, *The Locomotive of War: Money, Empire, Power and Guilt*, will be published in February by Bloomsbury in London and New York.
Atomic Action


Review by Christopher Sterling

One of those relatively rare academic writers who can make document-based research both readable and interesting (and I say that as a retired academic), Kevin Ruane takes his readers back to the 1940–55 era of rapid atomic and thermonuclear weapon development to illustrate just how dominant fear of the bomb was in policymaking circles. He centers his history on the so-called “special relationship” between the US and Britain, though for much of this period, “special” meant precious little, as the British quickly learned.

Following by only three years Graham Farmelo’s well-received *Churchill’s Bomb: How the United States Overtook Britain in the First Nuclear Arms Race* (Basic Books, 2013) [Reviewed in FH 162], Ruane had a difficult task on his hands. The two British authors take a different approach to their accounts of the same period and people. For one thing, Farmelo is a physicist, while Ruane is an historian. The differences in their studies build on the authors’ academic training by emphasizing different aspects of the complex story. Briefly, Farmelo focuses more on the scientists who did the work while, Ruane centers his study on Churchill himself.

Ruane sees Churchill as playing three related yet quite different roles: the “bomb-maker” during the Second World War; the “atomic diplomatist” during the decade after 1945; and the “nuclear peacemaker” toward the end of his second period as prime minister (1951–55). His well-written study melds Churchill and key figures close to him—Frederick Lindemann (the “Prof” as the simplifier of complex technologies), Anthony Eden (frustrated by years of waiting for Churchill to retire), Sir John Anderson (chief official of the British “tube alloys” research), Roosevelt (the American president with on-again, off-again views on working with the British in tube alloys), and many others on both sides of the Atlantic.

What many readers may find surprising is that the British were first into the research for a bomb, in crucial theoretical work and some practical efforts. They remained ahead into 1942, when the US began to build (partially on previous British work) what became the huge Manhattan Project. The scope and cost of the work were simply more than war-damaged Britain could afford. But—and this is a central theme in Ruane’s story—as the American effort to build a workable bomb grew, British participation (with a few exceptions) fell by the wayside.

Churchill was appalled that despite two informal atomic bomb cooperative agreements with Roosevelt (one signed at Hyde Park, the other at Quebec), American authorities most directly involved with the bomb project sought (largely successfully) to prevent any sharing of information on bomb fabrication. After the war, Congress formalized American unilaterality with the 1948 McMahon Act, which forbid sharing of atomic secrets with any other nation. Thus British bomb research, moribund since 1942, was reignited, leading to a successful test of a bomb in 1951. But this happened while Churchill was out of power. His chief contribution came after his return to Downing Street when, in 1954, he approved the quest for a British hydrogen bomb, following in the wake of successful H-bomb tests by both America and the Soviet Union. That quest led to Britain becoming the world’s third thermonuclear power.

All of this could be terribly dry in the telling. But Ruane tells it with verve, making good use of personal and other details that provide color. That is vital to retaining a reader’s interest in such a long book. Especially well told is the story of the “July days” in 1954, when Churchill’s government nearly came apart over his solo invitation to Soviet leaders to parlay “at the summit.” The invitation had not been cleared in advance with the Cabinet nor with Washington, the latter a sad indicator of Britain’s diminished world role.

This is an important addition to the Churchill literature, filling a gap (along with Farmelo’s work) in what we can now know—thanks to declassification of documents on both sides of the Atlantic—about a crucial period, especially the postwar jockeying for national position in the growing Cold War.
Chris Sterling, recently retired after thirty-five years of teaching and administration at George Washington University, is a frequent reviewer for Finest Hour.

Hall of Ivy


Review by Christopher Sterling

Of the many “Churchill and...” or “The Untold Story of...” titles, this brief book really is an untold story of one aspect of Churchill’s life few of us know. A man who never attended university, Churchill served as chancellor of the University of Bristol for the last thirty-six years of his life. This booklet is based on a lecture Sir David Cannadine delivered in observance of the half-century anniversary of Churchill’s death.

A word of background for those used to American university practice: in Britain, a university chancellor normally plays only a ceremonial role (as when conferring honorary degrees at graduation, for example), rather than being a fulltime, active administrator. Further, in Churchill’s time an appointment as a university chancellor was typically held for life. This is no longer the case at Bristol, which leaves Churchill the university’s longest-serving chancellor and likely to remain so.

Churchill, just ending his years at the Exchequer in 1929, was touted for the post by several Bristol academics and others despite his lack of any connection to the West Country school. And for the first fifteen years or so, dutifully garbed in his handsome Chancellor (of the Exchequer) robe, Churchill was often on hand for the requisite ceremonies. His last appearance was in 1954, eleven years before his death.

This is a charming record of Churchill’s role as Bristol’s Chancellor, filling in yet another interesting bit of knowledge about a multi-faceted man. A distinguished academic (both in the UK and now in the US) himself, Cannadine writes with useful inside knowledge of the world(s) of academe.

Master of the House


Review by Stefan Buczacki

There is a late nineteenth-century volume in my library in which the author begins his introduction thus: “There are already so many books in the world that it is incumbent upon anyone writing another to justify its existence.” It is a maxim I have used many times, but when Leslie Hossack’s book arrived on my desk, my first impression was that this glorious and sumptuous work surely had no need to defend itself. It is without doubt the most beautiful book ever published about Churchill’s life; it has the finest photographs, and it ventures down some seldom explored by-ways. And it is innovative in offering us such unexpected images as those of his tailor’s premises and his London wine merchants, as well as of more familiar and expected places: the Houses of Parliament, Chartwell, and Blenheim Palace.

So much for this large, splendid, if costly volume and what it is; but now for what it is not. It is certainly not, as Ronald Cohen in his foreword suggests, the first to tell the Churchill story “via the buildings...which were part of his life.” Nor does the book even cover all his residences, because there are several inexplicable exclusions. For instance, his first, albeit brief, childhood home at 48 Charles Street in Mayfair was arguably the most attractive of all the town houses in which he lived and is ignored for no obvious reason. That may be thought a minor matter, as is the absence of the Churchill retreats like Hoe Farm. But there are two much more important and quite astonishing omissions. First, where is Chequers, the Prime Minister’s official country residence, which meant so much to Churchill and where he spent a considerable and hugely important amount of time? And second, where is Lulenden? This ancient house on the borders of Sussex, Surrey, and Kent was Churchill’s first country home, bought during the First World War and which he and Clementine
owned from 1916 until late 1919. Lullenden was pivotal in Churchill’s life and was where he first acquired his taste for land ownership. Without Lullenden there would have been no Chartwell; and it is a visually arresting house too, so the book is much the poorer without it.

Given the cost of the book, it is reasonable to quibble over some of the images, photographically good as they may be. The printing has sometimes let the author down, and some plates are not so crisp as one feels entitled to expect. Moreover some shots are just odd: for instance why show the rear of Lord Randolph’s house at 2 Connaught Place and not its more attractive front, albeit the scope for a good camera angle there is more limited? The image purporting to show 11 Downing Street, Churchill’s home when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, is in fact a view of the entrance to Downing Street, with No. 11 barely discernible in the distance. And the image captioned “10 Downing Street” is even worse, it merely shows the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Cabinet Office, with the Prime Minister’s residence completely invisible.

And then there is the absence of any traffic in the photographs. In her introduction, Hossack states: “During my post-production process, these images are carefully crafted to look the way I feel the buildings might have appeared decades ago. Is this documentary photography or fine art photography? For me, it is simply my art.” I have no real argument with this if it helps a house to be seen more clearly. I do think, however, it is misleading to alter the appearance of the property itself, as seems to have been done with 28 Hyde Park Gate, where the blue plaque of today is missing. If the intention was to try and turn the clock back and show the buildings as Churchill saw them, it should be pointed out that all have changed, some practically beyond recognition.

If you are seeking a definitive illustrated account of all the residences Churchill occupied, this is not it, and the text does not reveal anything of which an average Churchill student would be unaware. There are also some elementary errors: for instance, legally Chartwell is not and never was Chartwell Manor. Leslie Hossack, nevertheless, is clearly a photographer of great merit, and if you want a truly glorious and sumptuous evocation of Churchill’s life, her book is unlikely ever to be bettered.


**Quick Looks: Intimations of Inexactitude**


**Review by David Freeman**

Hard to find and hardly worth it, the latest “wit & wisdom” book came out in 2015 as an obvious attempt to capitalize on events commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Churchill’s death. Paradoxically, the book’s initial availability through online sellers seemed harder to nail down than the smoke from Sir Winston’s cigar. By 2016, though, the book had been remaindered and sold at a steep discount.

Churchill quote books have proliferated for decades. Most are worthless, and this is no exception. The editors provide a list of books...
at the end from which they apparently have drawn their material. Most quotations are not cited, however, except for a few extracts from speeches. Unsurprisingly, then, the text includes its fair share of misquotes and misattributions. Once again, readers are reminded that their best resource for this genre is Richard M. Langworth’s Churchill in His Own Words.

At least The Wit & Wisdom editors were well-meaning. In Grand Deception: Churchill and the Dardanelles, author Tom Curran starts with an attitude of pure malevolence. The word among academics down under is that the Australian branch of Cambridge University Press expressed an interest in publishing what was originally a doctoral dissertation and sent it to the UK office for review, which said no. Some believe it was because Cambridge UK was unwilling to publish anything critical of Churchill, but this seems unlikely. In any case, it has been published with the financial assistance of the Australian army’s historical section.

Cambridge probably declined to publish Grand Deception because it is simply a truly awful book—the worst sort of amateur rubbish and shocking to think someone got a Ph.D. for it. Ironically, the author died prematurely before publication of the book, which was edited by an academic mentor. Curran accepted as gospel truth every criticism of Churchill he ever read, no matter how flimsy the evidence, and dismissed out of hand anything remotely positive. And he made some outrageous errors (e.g., quoting Martin Gilbert’s words and attributing them to Churchill). A puckish Churchill might have termed these “attributions of inexactitude.”

David Freeman is the editor of Finest Hour.

“He Painted the Things He Loved”

Edwina Sandys, Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting, Donning, 2015, 128 pages, $49.95.
ISBN 978–1681840109

Review by David Freeman

What I love about this book is the love within it. Edwina Sandys is not only a granddaughter of Sir Winston, she is herself a professional artist. “People frequently ask me if my grandfather was a good painter,” she recalls. “I always answer emphatically YES! He was good because he painted the things he loved.”

We have had important books about Churchill as a painter before, most notably those by his daughter Mary, his granddaughter-in-law Minnie Churchill, and the leading authority on Churchill canvasses David Coombs. This newest volume must be considered another essential element in the library about Churchill the artist.

The impetus for Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting was a wonderful exhibit of Churchill canvasses put on with the support of the National Churchill Museum in Fulton, Missouri, and displayed at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum at Washington University in St. Louis. Timothy Riley, paintings curator at Fulton, put the exhibit together and provides the information about each painting reproduced in this book. An interesting detail includes a list of all the exhibits each canvas has appeared in before.

Boris Johnson, formerly the Mayor of London and now Foreign Secretary, provides an introduction in which he notes that when it came to painting, Churchill “wasn’t fooling around.” “You can feel the release and the enthusiasm with which he has splodged that pigment on,” Johnson writes, “he sets out to please and reward the viewer, and he succeeds.”

But the heart and soul of this book, apart from the handsomely presented reproductions of the paintings, is Edwina’s essay about her memories of her grandfather and her appreciation as an artist about what painting meant to him. “There was art in Churchill’s politics, but no politics in his art,” Edwina observes. “Unashamedly, he painted for pure pleasure, chan-
neling his joie de vivre onto the canvas.”

One of Churchill’s best and most beloved paintings is Bottlescape, which was done in 1926 and now hangs permanently in the dining room at Chartwell. For Edwina, this “one painting sums up his Love of Life.” She appreciated it so much that she produced a hommage by painting a depiction of her grandfather working at the original painting. It is reproduced here facing its muse.

“Happy are the painters!” Churchill famously enthused. That spirit he passed onto his granddaughter, and the warmth is felt on every page of this beautiful book.

Who’s Laughing Now?


Review by Mark Klobas

During the Second World War, millions of Britons tuned in regularly to the radio broadcasts from Reichssender Hamburg, the English-language propaganda station operated by Nazi Germany. The network’s leading broadcaster was “Lord Haw-Haw,” who nightly rattled listeners with his seeming omniscience about events in Britain and his confident predictions of German victory. Though the sobriquet was applied to nearly all of the British broadcasters working for the Germans, it was most frequently associated with William Joyce, who for his activities on behalf of the Nazis was arrested after the war, tried for treason, and executed by the British—the last person in British history to be put to death for that crime.

Joyce’s life was layered throughout with conflict and mystery, much of it generated by Joyce himself. One of the achievements of Colin Holmes’s new book is in the extent to which he unravels many of these mysteries using the available sources. To that end, the author engaged in years of research, interviewing many of the people who knew Joyce and researching recently declassified documents in archives throughout Britain as well as abroad. The result is a book that offers us our best understanding yet of the circumstances of Joyce’s life and the factors that led him to become both a fascist and a servant of the Third Reich.

Joyce was the son of an Irish businessman; his birth is usually traced to Brooklyn in 1906, though he often gave different ages and locations when it suited him. The family returned to Ireland in 1907, though their Unionist beliefs and young Joyce’s work as an informer for military intelligence forced him to abandon Ireland for England after the Irish War of Independence. Settling in London, Joyce quickly gravitated towards the budding fascist movement in the country. As a young man of considerable self-regard, he increasingly came into conflict with Oswald Mosley in the mid-1930s and was purged from the British Union of Fascists in 1937.

What proved the turning point of Joyce’s life was his decision on the eve of the Second World War to travel to Germany with his second wife Margaret and offer his services to the Nazi regime. Joyce soon established himself as their foremost English-language broadcaster—“the best horse in our stable,” in Joseph Goebbels’ judgment. Though never enjoying the listenership possessed by Winston Churchill—whom Joyce described in one broadcast as a “whisky-guzzling, cigar-chomping, bovine decadent liar”—he nonetheless waged a war of words against the prime minister throughout the conflict, right up to a final, drunkenly defiant screed recorded on the day Adolf Hitler committed suicide. Given the contentious and convoluted nature of Joyce’s life, Holmes’s book is an admirable and mostly successful effort to clarify our understanding of it. More than just an analysis of Joyce’s political career, it is also a study of the milieu of British fascist politics in which it took place, as well as Joyce’s own efforts to present key details so as to affirm his views of the world. Anyone seeking to understand the life and career of one of Churchill’s most prominent wartime adversaries would do well to start with this book, thanks to its measured judgments that are well supported by Holmes’s diligent research.

Mark Klobas teaches history at Scottsdale College in Arizona and hosts a podcast for the New Books Network.
The Prime Minister’s Secret Agent is the fourth book in the Maggie Hope series to be reviewed in Finest Hour. The first three are Mr. Churchill’s Secretary (FH 156), Princess Elizabeth’s Spy (FH 158), and His Majesty’s Hope (FH 160).

In The Prime Minister’s Secret Agent, Maggie is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to her last mission to Berlin. Unfortunately, Ms. MacNeal succumbs to the same temptation as other novelists who employ Churchill as a literary character and has Maggie describe her very real PTSD as something akin to Churchill’s “Black Dog” because “She’d once heard Winston Churchill describe his own melancholy as his ‘Black Dog.’” Maggie does have very real psychiatric problems, including insomnia and nightmares over her ordeal in Berlin, where she had killed a man and helplessly watched a little Jewish girl shoved into a cattle car. The reference to Churchill’s “Black Dog” because “She’d once heard Winston Churchill describe his own melancholy as his ‘Black Dog.’” Maggie does have very real psychiatric problems, including insomnia and nightmares over her ordeal in Berlin, where she had killed a man and helplessly watched a little Jewish girl shoved into a cattle car. The reference to Churchill’s “Black Dog” because “She’d once heard Winston Churchill describe his own melancholy as his ‘Black Dog.’”

The various plot lines about Maggie include her service as a hard-nosed SOE training instructor in the Scottish Highlands while she recovers from her PTSD, her discovery of Britain’s anthrax development program, her solving a mystery involving the deaths of several women by accidental anthrax poisoning, as well as dealing with a love life complicated by the return of her RAF lover whom she thought had died and who is unhappy she found a new beau in his absence.

There is also a major non-Maggie story line involving the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, told from the viewpoints of the actual Japanese, American, and British historical characters involved, including Ian Fleming and the British double agent Dusan Popov, who was sent by the Abwehr to map out Pearl Harbor. The Pearl Harbor story is, for the most part, well and accurately told except for when Ms. MacNeal posits that Churchill and British intelligence knew of the pending Japanese attack and chose not to warn America. This is plausible—barely—but it is well done. After all, her Churchill muses, if he tips the Americans, they will denounce the Japanese; Pearl Harbor will be on alert; the Japanese will call off the attack and turn their attention to British territories in Asia.

So verisimilitude is maintained at this point, and the historical errors that occur later are minor, e.g., Admiral Kimmel would never call a US Navy sailor “private”; the Repulse and Prince of Wales were not sunk the day before Pearl Harbor; and FDR did not invite Churchill to visit America immediately. Churchill certainly asked, but FDR put him off, saying he could not possibly see him for at least a month. That did not change until after Hitler declared war on the US, and FDR decided he could meet Churchill after all.

There are two more Maggie Hope novels already available that will be reviewed in future issues of FH: Mrs Roosevelt’s Confidante, which takes place during Churchill’s 1941 Christmas visit to the White House and The Queen’s Accomplice set in 1942 London, where a Jack the Ripper copycat is killing female SOE agents.

Novels are rated one to three stars on two questions: Is the portrayal of Churchill accurate, and is the book worth reading?

Michael McMenamin writes the “Action This Day” column. He and his son Patrick are co-authors of the award-winning Winston Churchill Thrillers series: The DeValera Deception, The Parsifal Pursuit, The Gemini Agenda, and The Berghof Betrayal set during Churchill’s Wilderness Years, 1929–1939.

“The opening of Churchill’s permanent home in your nation’s capital is truly a thrilling moment,” said Randolph Churchill, great-grandson of Sir Winston Churchill and now President of the International Churchill Society. “I am more confident than ever that Churchill’s legacy will now be secure in the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

The bright and welcoming space on the ground floor of the university’s Estelle and Marvin Gelman Library will host a variety of programming on leadership through the lens of Winston Churchill. One wall is dominated by three large interactive touchscreens, where visitors can explore Churchill’s youth, his experience in war and conflict, and his political career. There is also a growing collection of books both by and about Churchill as well as his Second World War engagement cards.

The center’s primary focus, however, will be on engaging the world in scholarly discussions about Winston Churchill’s core values and how they apply to the global issues of today—many of which have parallels to the challenges Churchill faced as a leader in the first half of the twentieth century.

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The earliest-known Churchill memorial is this one, erected by the widow of John Churchill, the family patriarch who was father to the first Sir Winston Churchill and grandfather of the first Duke of Marlborough. See story page 14.